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**Nietzsche's affirmative attitude towards 'the life-affirming type of gods'
an investigation into the positive aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion**

Hirai, Ryoichi

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Title

**Nietzsche's affirmative attitude towards 'the life-affirming type of gods':
an investigation into the positive aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion**

Ryoichi Hirai

A thesis submitted for the award of PhD

King's College London

Abstract

This thesis investigates certain key positive aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion, while respecting the way his philosophy as a whole changed throughout the course of his life. In the end, the aim is to produce a just portrait of Nietzsche, a philosopher who, contrary to the popular image of his being anti-religious, recognised keenly the positive effects a certain type of gods can have on human beings. I begin the thesis by suggesting that, after his abandonment of his early 'religious communitarianism', Nietzsche became a 'religious' aristocratic individualist who set the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest goal and attempted to find the way to achieve it in a certain type of gods, what I call 'the life-affirming type of gods'. Then, after discussing some interpretative issues concerning his writings in general, I examine his early positive religious thinking. Next, I discuss Nietzsche's concern for the nurturing of 'higher types'. I suggest that his conception of 'higher types' is an ultimate representation of his idea of 'human greatness' capable of creating cultural greatness and new 'life-affirming' values, all of which is connected with his concern for 'suffering'. Further, to clarify the nature of 'higher types' in greater depth, I examine other related conceptions of his, namely 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation'. In the final part of the thesis, as I illustrate how Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking focuses on 'the life-affirming type of gods', I examine his idea of the nature and effects of these gods, with reference to his criticism of the Christian conception of God. Finally, I present and argue for my view of how he intends the life-affirming type of gods to contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'.

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Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my principal supervisor, Dr Christopher Hamilton, who has given me so much over the years. Without his generous encouragement and support, I simply could not have come this far. My gratitude to him is beyond expression. I am also grateful to my second supervisor, Professor Paul D Janz, for his invaluable advice. I would also like to thank my former second supervisor, Professor Peter Byrne, who gave me much encouragement in the early stage of my research. My deepest debt is, as ever, to my family, especially my mother.

List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche's works are usually cited by abbreviation and by section number [*not* by page numbers], and their full publication details are given in the Bibliography. So, for instance, (BT: 23) refers to Section 23 of The Birth of Tragedy. (BT: *Preface*) refers to the 'preface' of The Birth of Tragedy. (BT: ASC, 6) refers to Section 6 of 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' of The Birth of Tragedy. (HAH: II, i, 218) refers to Section 218 of Part One of Volume Two of Human, All Too Human. (GM: II, 16) refers to Section 16 of Second Essay of On the Genealogy of Morals.

Note that references to Thus Spoke Zarathustra follow the abbreviations used in the Contents pages of Kaufmann's translation. References to Ecce Homo are cited by abbreviation, followed by a shortened form of chapter heading, and section number. So, for instance, (EH: *Wise*, 1) refers to Section 1 of Chapter 'Why I Am So Wise' of Ecce Homo. References to Nietzsche's early unpublished essays, such as Homer's Contest, are cited by abbreviation and by page numbers. References to Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden are cited by abbreviation, followed by full details, including volume number and page numbers.

AC	The Antichrist
ASC	"Attempt at a Self-Criticism" in The Birth of Tragedy
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
CW	The Case of Wagner
D	Daybreak
DW	The Dionysiac World View

EH	Ecce Homo
GM	On the Genealogy of Morals
GS	The Gay Science
HAH	Human, All-too-Human
HC	Homer's Contest
KSA	Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden
TGS	The Greek State
TI	Twilight of the Idols
UM	Untimely Mediations
WP	The Will to Power
Z	Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to investigate certain key positive aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion that have been often neglected in Nietzsche studies. Since his death, countless studies have been conducted on Nietzsche by numerous people belonging to very diverse fields and movements, and his philosophy of religion has always served as one of the most popular topics for commentators. Until thirteen years ago or so, most commentators considered Nietzsche to be anti-religious, a "professed" atheist who considered the belief in God as "an historically determined symptom of man's weakness and subordination".¹ Therefore, the tendency of studies of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion was to concentrate on its negative aspect, namely, his criticism of Christianity. As the result, the positive aspect of his philosophy of religion was largely ignored.

Certainly, a reasonable number of studies were conducted on Nietzsche's ambivalent attitudes towards Judaism and Christianity that were both negative and positive. A commentator who took this direction was Weaver Santaniello. By recognising Nietzsche's affirmative attitude towards both the ancient Hebrews and modern Jewry, as well as his ambivalent attitude towards prophetic-priestly Judaism, Santaniello in her Nietzsche, God and the Jews examined "the personal and religiopolitical aspects" of his positive stance towards Judaism, and illustrated his strong identification with the Jewish minority in then Germany.² Some commentators even

¹ Stern (1985): p.14. Certainly, not everyone perceived Nietzsche to be anti-religious. Notably, Lou Salomé, to whom Nietzsche famously proposed, emphasized in her Nietzsche [originally published in 1894] that Nietzsche should be interpreted as a religious thinker who was obsessed with God throughout his life (see Salomé 2001: *passim*). A similar view was also expressed by Walter Schubart in his Dostjewski und Nietzsche: Symbolik Ihres Lebens [originally published in 1939], who described the theme of Nietzsche's thought as "*Die Suche nach Gott*" (see Schubart 1946: p. 15).

² See Santaniello (1994): pp. 3-4.

argued for a deep affinity in outlook between Nietzsche and Christianity. For instance, Karl Jaspers in his Nietzsche & Christianity attempted to show “how much of a Christian” Nietzsche actually was by illustrating “the Christian basis of . . . [the] real motivating forces” of his thought.³ Similarly, F. A. Lea in his The Tragic Philosopher: Friedrich Nietzsche attempted to illustrate how the attitude of Nietzsche was actually more approximate to that of “the authentic Jesus of Nazareth” and even to that of both Paul and Augustine than Nietzsche himself had ever imagined. And Lea argued that Nietzsche misunderstood Jesus only because he had always seen him through “Schopenhauer’s dark glasses”, as the “personification of denial of the will to live”.⁴

However, I find these types of studies somewhat unsatisfactory, since what they attempt to do is, most fundamentally, to limit the significance of Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity and Judaism by revealing possible causes behind what they perceive to be Nietzsche’s misunderstanding of these religions.⁵ As a result, I think, the positive aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy of religion still remain overlooked. For instance, while commentators have taken notice of many remarks Nietzsche made on the Olympian gods of ancient Greece in his works, there has hardly been any study that examined seriously the possible significance of his life-long affirmative attitude towards this particular type of gods.

But the situation is starting to change at last. Recently, there has been the publication of a collection of papers written specifically on the theme of Nietzsche’s relation to religion, Nietzsche and the Divine, edited by John Lippitt and Jim Urpeth, who write in the introduction,

³ See Jaspers (1963): pp. vii-viii

⁴ See Lea (1993): pp. 334-349. Recently, Bruce Ellis Benson has examined the commonality between Nietzsche and Paul in terms of their tasks – such as the ‘revaluation of all values’ –, and has argued that “Nietzsche turns out to be a “second Paul”” (see Benson 2008: p. 119ff).

⁵ Stephen N. Williams is a recent commentator who has examined and illustrated Nietzsche’s misunderstanding of Christianity extensively (see Williams S. N 2006: *passim*).

“Many readers of Nietzsche will, no doubt, be uneasy about the tendency of a number of papers in this collection to complicate considerably and to render ambiguous Nietzsche’s relation to the ‘divine’. They will be even more nervous when, as in some cases, a ‘religious’ sensibility is said to underpin and pervade Nietzsche’s thought”.⁶ This was immediately followed by the publication of a collection of essays of a similar nature, Nietzsche and the Gods, edited by Santaniello, who writes in the preface, “it is seldom recognized that Nietzsche thought more about the gods and how they functioned in the human psyche and in culture than do most religious thinkers. . . . [Nietzsche] was a profound religious thinker who spent much of his writing career reevaluating the concept of god that prevailed in nineteenth-century Germany. . . . this edition will also serve to challenge impulsive claims that Nietzsche was “atheistic” or “irreligious,” rendering such statements as needing dire qualification”.⁷

More recently, this new endeavour to question and refute the traditional view of Nietzsche as an ‘anti-religious’ and ‘atheistic’ thinker has been followed up by the publication of Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion by Julian Young: a book dedicated solely to the in-depth investigation into the positive aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy of religion. In this book, Young claims that in his maiden work BT Nietzsche both regarded pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as a “communal religion” which solidified the bonds of Greek community in the sight of its divinities, and recognised how a society would decline without such a religion. Accordingly, Young claims, Nietzsche believed that modernity could be redeemed from the decadence only through the rebirth of Greek tragedy as a communal religious festival promised by Wagner’s music drama. From this early thinking of Nietzsche’s, Young identifies both “*communitarian* thinking” that regards the flourishing of community as the highest object of its concern, and

⁶ Lippitt & Urpeth (2000): p. xvi

⁷ Santaniello (2001): pp. xii & xvi

“*religious* thinking” that regards a communal religious festival proper as the essential ingredient to the flourishing of community, classifying Nietzsche’s early thinking as a whole “religious communitarianism”.⁸

Now, apart from the term ‘religious communitarianism’, there is nothing new about Young’s claim, since most commentators have always acknowledged – in one way or another – the presence of such a kind of – religious – thinking in BT. But this kind of thinking has been traditionally regarded as something exclusive to Nietzsche in the early ‘romantic’ period.⁹ The consensus has been that Nietzsche eventually abandoned his ‘religious communitarianism’ after his separation from Wagnerianism, and that he became an atheist, anti-religious. However, against this fixed idea, Young claims that Nietzsche “*never* was” an atheist, *never* was anti-religious, for “Nietzsche in fact *never* abandoned his religious communitarianism”: Nietzsche’s highest value always was the flourishing of community, which, he continued to believe, could only be achieved by the re-creation of ‘communal’ life-affirming religious festival modelled on pre-Socratic Greek tragedy. Hence, Young argues, “Though atheistic with respect to the *Christian* God, Nietzsche, I hold, ought to be regarded as a religious *reformer* rather than an enemy of religion”.¹⁰

⁸ See Young (2006): p. 1

⁹ It has become a standard practice among commentators to divide Nietzsche’s works into three periods, the early ‘romantic’ period [1872-1876], the middle ‘positivist’ period [1877-1882] and the late period [1883-1888], though there are different interpretations of details. See, e.g., Jaspers (1997): pp. 42-57.

¹⁰ See Young (2006): p. 2. More recently, after the publication of Young’s book, Benson in his Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith has also strongly argued for the “deeply religious nature of Nietzsche’s thought”. Benson claims that not only does Nietzsche begin as a Pietist, but also he “remains essentially a Pietist to the end of his life”, since his goal is “to overcome his early religiosity in order to move to a *new* religiosity”, to free himself from “the [orthodox] Christian Pietism of his youth” by creating “a new – and significantly different – Pietism” (see Benson 2008: pp. 3-8).

Now, I welcome and agree with Young's claim that Nietzsche always was a profoundly religious thinker. However, Young seems to me to get it wrong when he claims that Nietzsche always maintained his religious communitarianism. For, on this point, I agree with many commentators that Nietzsche ultimately abandoned religious communitarianism, and embraced instead a kind of 'individualistic' thinking which is primarily concerned with the flourishing of few exceptional individuals whose existence itself forms the cultural greatness of the community, and whom he calls 'higher types'. More precisely, my view is that he always possessed both communitarianism and individualistic thinking. And while he gave priority to the former in the early 'romantic' period, he began attaching far greater significance to the latter from the middle 'positivist' period onward. So, while he continued to possess a concern for the flourishing of community generally, his highest value ultimately became the flourishing of those whom he calls 'higher types', extraordinarily creative individuals with superior human greatness who can create new life-affirming values.

Accordingly, it seems to me that Young, in failing to recognise this significance of Nietzsche's individualistic thinking, which decisively constitutes the backbone of his mature philosophy as a whole, also misinterprets the real positive aspects of the mature Nietzsche's philosophy of religion. That is, in my view, as Nietzsche eventually accepted the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest value, his positive religious thinking also came to change its shape and nature. And, contrary to Young's view, what Nietzsche ultimately came to focus on and value in his mature works is no longer the 'communal' life-affirming religious festival that can contribute towards the flourishing of 'community', but rather what I call 'the life-affirming type of god[s]', a certain type of 'god[s]' symbolised by the Olympian gods of ancient Greece, who can help individuals to flourish and thus contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'. And

the aim of this thesis is to argue for this view of mine, in order to make a further contribution towards this new endeavour to refute the traditional view of Nietzsche as ‘anti-religious’.

In Chapter 1, I explain the exact nature of individualistic thinking I attribute to Nietzsche. As I examine several different kinds of ‘individualist’ readings provided by commentators, I propose my ‘un-militaristic’, ‘moderately political’ and ‘religious’ aristocratic individualist reading, which regards Nietzsche both as a philosopher who shows concern for actual socio-political life but does not possess a proper political philosophy that justifies and endorses specific political ideals, and as a religious thinker who sets the nurturing of ‘higher types’ as his highest goal and attempts to find the way to achieve it not in any ‘militarism’ or ‘politics’ but in a certain conception of ‘god[s]’.

In Chapter 2, I investigate Nietzsche’s early religious thinking presented in BT. But firstly, I discuss some interpretative issues concerning Nietzsche’s historical narratives and genealogical accounts. I argue that Nietzsche’s historical narratives and genealogical accounts are not ‘factual’, but essentially ‘fictional’ narratives that are created by Nietzsche as means to illustrate and illuminate his ideas. Then, I examine the nature and effects of two types of ‘life-affirming’ religion which Nietzsche proposes in BT as the two possible solutions to make our life possible, bearable and worth living. As I discuss Nietzsche’s key ideas in this regard, I point out several fundamental problems concerning his arguments for these types of religion.

In Chapter 3, I provide a general discussion on how we should interpret ‘higher types’ as Nietzsche’s value. As I outline how Nietzsche’s thinking as a whole changed from the early period, I suggest that his conception of ‘higher types’ is essentially an ultimate representation of

his idea of 'human greatness' capable of creating cultural greatness and new 'life-affirming' values, all of which is connected with his concern for 'suffering'. Then, as I continue to develop my view on how we should interpret his conception of 'higher types', I argue that Nietzsche actually provides us with no concrete example of a higher type in his works, and that his conception of higher types is also essentially a product of various fantasies, a fluid compound made up of ever-changing longings and desires for certain characteristics by which Nietzsche was himself fascinated and sometimes gripped.

In Chapter 4, to clarify the nature of 'higher types' further, I examine other related key conceptions of Nietzsche's, namely 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation'. By exploring two different conceptions of 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation' he presents in his works, I attempt to establish some of the key distinctive characteristics that he ascribes to 'higher types'. In the process, I particularly highlight and illustrate how Nietzsche's writings display a strong tension between the desire to endorse a certain brutal way of life, that, for example, led by people like Napoleon, and the recognition that such a way of life is just not possible in the modern world and also in itself hollow. And I also argue that one of his ideas of life-affirmation expressed by his doctrine of 'the eternal recurrence', which Nietzsche claims to be the 'highest formula of affirmation', can actually become life-denying in certain contexts.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the nature of Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking. As I illustrate how Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking focuses on 'the life-affirming type of gods', I examine his idea of the nature and effects of these gods, with reference to his criticism of the Christian conception of God. Then, I present and argue for my view of how Nietzsche intends the life-affirming type of gods to contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'. I argue that Nietzsche does not aim to recreate a Greek religion or a new religious myth, and that what he actually provides or wishes to offer through his continual positive valuation of

the life-affirming type of gods is a particular religious perspective on 'life'. More concretely, through his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods, what he tries to give us readers is a new religious sensibility.

The general aim of this thesis is to construct a coherent view of Nietzsche's positive religious thinking from his published works, while respecting the way his philosophy as a whole changed throughout the course of his life. Concerning the Nachlass, I refer to this only when it actually endorses the points I make from his published works. Throughout the thesis, I follow traditional practice and, where appropriate, use the masculine pronoun to refer indifferently to both men and women. I do so for reasons of style, and no sexist implication is intended.

Chapter 1

Nietzsche's individualistic thinking

In this chapter, I examine the nature of Nietzsche's individualistic thinking. Firstly, in Section A, against Julian Young who claims that Nietzsche always maintained the religious communitarianism which sets the flourishing of the community as its highest value, I argue that Nietzsche eventually abandoned religious communitarianism, and embraced instead a kind of 'individualistic' thinking which is primarily concerned with the flourishing of few exceptional individuals, whom he calls 'higher types'. More precisely, I suggest that Nietzsche always possessed both communitarianism and individualistic thinking. And while he gave priority to the former in the early period, he began attaching far greater significance to the latter from the middle period onwards. Hence, in the end, while he continued to possess a concern for the flourishing of the community, his highest value became the nurturing of 'higher types'.

Then, through Section B and Section C, I explain the nature of individualistic thinking I attribute to Nietzsche. As I examine several different 'individualist' readings provided by commentators, I propose my 'un-militaristic', 'moderately political' and 'religious' aristocratic individualist reading, which regards Nietzsche both as a philosopher who shows concern for actual socio-political life but does not possess a proper political philosophy or theory that justifies and endorses specific political ideals, and as a religious thinker who sets the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest goal and attempts to find the way to achieve it not in any 'militarism' or 'politics' but in a certain conception of 'gods'. And in the process, I also discuss how we should approach disturbing elements of Nietzsche's writings, such as his seemingly affirmative remarks on 'war' and 'slavery'.

Section A: Nietzsche's abandonment of 'religious communitarianism'

Young in his Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion claims that Nietzsche presents in BT 'religious communitarianism', which regards the creation of a new 'communal' life-affirming religious festival modelled on pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as the key to the regeneration of authentic community, as the only solution to modern-day decadence. And Young argues, "Nietzsche in fact *never* abandoned his religious communitarianism. To the end . . . Nietzsche's fundamental concern, his highest value, lies with the flourishing of community, and to the end he believes that this can happen only through the flourishing of communal religion".¹

Let me provide a more detailed summary of the nature of religious communitarianism that Young attributes to Nietzsche. According to Young, on the one hand, Nietzsche's thinking is in proximity to the 'Volkish' (*Völkisch*) thinking of the late nineteenth-century German conservative anti-modernists. They both similarly regard 'modernity' as a sick culture and subsequently idealise ancient Greece and medieval Europe. They also similarly reject 'democracy' both as an impediment to the production of eminent leaders and as a cause of various insecurities among ordinary people. And they also similarly condemn 'stateism', which disavows the priority of the 'Volk' (*Volk*) over the state,² and deplore the 'shopkeeper' mentality in which the pursuit of private advantage replaces the community as a whole as the object of primary commitment. And, in terms of their redemptive side, they both similarly seek

¹ Young (2006): p. 2

² According to Young, *Völkisch* thinking originated from the anxiety and critical reactions of German romantic thinkers against the eighteenth-century Enlightenment rationalism and the subsequent industrial modernity in which every aspect of human life is invaded by instrumental reason. And a 'Volk' as 'an organic totality' which precedes both the state and the individual is what was discovered in an idealised image of the pre-Enlightenment past by those thinkers who were pursuing a spiritually unified 'organic' society capable of producing the authentically human individual (see Young 2006: pp. 4-5 & 202-6).

to cure the sickness of modernity by developing new spirituality through a kind of ‘life-reform’ movement that concerns itself with bodily ‘hygiene’ in a broad sense, by returning to a hierarchical society under the rule of an exceptional leader, and, most crucially, by reintegrating the *Volk* through the re-creation of ‘a communal religion’. On the other hand, Nietzsche’s thinking also shares cosmopolitanism with Enlightenment thinking, whose chief concern is the whole world as a community. That is, Nietzsche is an internationalist who sought a revived European culture as world culture. Hence, his thinking is “a unique mixture of Enlightenment and anti-Enlightenment ideals”, a harmonious mixture of religious communitarianism and cosmopolitanism that aims to establish the religiously based world community with ‘unity in multiplicity’ through the rebirth of the medieval ‘Roman’ Church with Christian gods supplanted by ‘Greek’ ones, which functions as a cosmopolitan, unifying institution.³

Now, I think Young is correct in some respects. Nietzsche was clearly concerned with the sickness of modernity throughout his life. He can be plausibly classified as an anti-democratic figure who favours an old type of hierarchical society, and he clearly romanticised ancient Greece in this context. Moreover, his various comments about the effects of food, drink, place and climate on the body, such as his suggestions on what one should eat and drink, also prompt us to see him as a kind of life-reformer (see, e.g., EH: *Clever*, 1-2). He was in the end not a German nationalist, as he came to abhor and reject the German imperialism vehemently. And, as far as looking at BT is concerned, Nietzsche clearly did set the flourishing of community as his highest goal, and regarded the re-creation of the ‘communal’ life-affirming religious festival analogous to pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as the key to his goal.

However, Young seems to me to get it wrong when he claims that Nietzsche always maintained the religious communitarianism that sets the flourishing of community as its highest

³ See Young (2006): pp. 201-215

value. For, on this point, I agree with many commentators that Nietzsche eventually abandoned the religious communitarianism, and embraced instead a kind of ‘individualistic’ thinking which is primarily concerned with the flourishing of few exceptional individuals, few extraordinary creative individuals capable of creating new life-affirming values, whose existence itself forms the cultural greatness of the community, whom Nietzsche often describes as ‘higher types’. To be more exact, my view is that Nietzsche always possessed both communitarianism and individualistic thinking. And while he gave priority to the former in the early ‘romantic’ period, he began attaching far greater significance to the latter from the middle ‘positivist’ period onwards. Hence, in the end, while he continued to possess a concern for the flourishing of the community generally, his highest value, his fundamental and foremost concern, became the flourishing of those few exceptional individuals, the nurturing of ‘higher types’.

Let me start clarifying my view. The youthful Nietzsche clearly presents in BT the communitarian thinking that sets the flourishing of community as the highest object of its concern. Despite having already acquired Swiss citizenship when he was writing the book, he still strongly identified Germany as his own community and was ardently concerned for the critical state of its culture. His highest value was the redemption of Germany as a community through the flourishing of its culture, through the establishment of its cultural unity. And he aimed to achieve this by the means of reviving a ‘communal’ life-affirming religious festival analogous to pre-Socratic Greek tragedy, which he believed to be now embodied by Wagner’s music-drama. So, in ‘Preface to Richard Wagner’ of BT which was written at the end of the year 1871, he describes the matter with which BT is concerned as “a seriously German problem” (BT: *Preface*). And he claims in a main section of BT, “Let no one try to blight our faith in a yet-impending rebirth of Hellenic antiquity; for this alone gives us hope for a renovation and purification of the German spirit through the fire magic of music. What else could we name that

might awaken any comforting expectations for the future in the midst of the desolation and exhaustion of contemporary culture?” (BT: 20).

However, it is interesting to note that when we glance at the suppressed earlier version of ‘Preface to Richard Wagner’ of BT which was written on February 1871, this youthful Nietzsche was also originally planning to present in BT ‘individualistic’ thinking that regards the flourishing of few exceptional individuals as the highest object of its concern. In this suppressed manuscript, he claims explicitly that “Neither the state, nor the people, nor mankind exist for the sake of themselves, but the goal lies in their peaks, in the great ‘individual’, the saints and the artists”, i.e. “the genius”, and that even “the state” is “only a means” to “the preparation and production of the genius” which is the highest “cultural tendency” (see KSA: VII, II = Mp XII I b. Februar 1871, pp. 354-355). Such ‘individualistic’ thinking is similarly reflected in his unpublished early essay TGS, which was also originally intended to be a part of BT. In this essay, Nietzsche describes the process of society as “the continuing, painful birth of those exalted men of culture in whose service everything else has to consume itself”, and claims that the state is “the means” of setting this process of society “in motion and guaranteeing its unobstructed continuation” (see TGS: p. 168).

This, I think, raises a possibility that Nietzsche was in fact always an individualistic thinker. That is, on the basis of all those ‘individualistic’ remarks he makes in the suppressed manuscripts for BT, we could suspect that the communitarian thinking he presented in BT was not something which sprang out from his true inner-nature, and that his highest value was actually already placed in few exceptional individuals when he wrote the book. And this seems to be a genuine possibility, since there are other adequate grounds on which to doubt the seriousness of his commitment to the communitarianism in BT.

Firstly, the person who decisively inspired and motivated Nietzsche to write BT was Wagner, whom Nietzsche idolised as a living creative genius. It seems that Wagner's influence on Nietzsche and on his religious communitarianism in BT cannot be underestimated. For, according to Silk and Stern, who have examined the biographical background of BT, though Nietzsche was already interested in Greek tragedy before he came to know Wagner, it was in all likelihood Wagner's music-drama that reignited his interest crucially. Further, it is also very likely that Wagner himself got involved in the planning of BT to some degree.⁴ And secondly, it appears to be the case that in the youthful Nietzsche's mind, his admiration for Wagner as a living creative genius always outweighed the significance he felt for Wagner's music-drama as a communal religious festival. For Silk and Stern interestingly document that the youthful Nietzsche was at first not overwhelmingly attracted to Wagner's music, and that his conversion to Wagner, which was gradual transition, became truly decisive only when he met Wagner in person. In other words, what ultimately drove Nietzsche to idolise Wagner was Wagner's powerful and impressive personality as well as his professed enthusiasm for Schopenhauer, of whom Nietzsche was already a great devotee. Moreover, Silk and Stern also document that, despite forming close relations with Wagner, Nietzsche's experience of Wagner's music-drama in its proper theatrical setting was very limited at the time of publication of BT: "the only Wagnerian work he had seen performed remained *Meistersinger*".⁵ On these grounds, it could be suggested that the religious communitarian element found in BT is an additional element Nietzsche as a Wagnerian attached purely from a sense of obligation to Wagner, in order academically to promote the significance of Wagner's music-drama and to endorse Wagner's

⁴ See Silk & Stern (1983): pp. 33 & 40

⁵ See Silk & Stern (1983): pp. 24-29 & 52

forthcoming Bayreuth Festival, and that he was in fact already an out-and-out individualistic thinker when he wrote the book.

Again, I find this to be a genuine possibility, since even long after he separated himself from Wagnerianism, Nietzsche still acknowledged that what he cherished most in his life was the friendship he had had with Wagner. As he remarks in EH written near the end of his career, “I’d let go cheap the whole rest of my human relationships; I should not want to give away out of my life at any price the days of Tribschen [Wagner’s home in Switzerland where Nietzsche visited frequently and enjoyed an intimate association with Wagner] – days of trust, of cheerfulness, of sublime accidents, of *profound* moments” (EH: *Clever*, 5).

So, should we conclude that Nietzsche was always an individualistic thinker? Not necessarily so, I think. For Silk and Stern seem right when they suggest that “notwithstanding the extent of Wagner’s influence, there is no good reason to suppose that Nietzsche ever went against his own inclinations for Wagner’s sake, whether by adding material, changing it or suppressing it”.⁶ Hence, it seems reasonable to believe that Nietzsche, at one point, seriously devoted himself to religious communitarianism. That is, we should accept that the youthful Nietzsche sincerely aimed for the establishment of cultural unity of Germany which, he believed, would make Germany flourish as a community, and regarded Wagner’s music-drama as a new ‘communal’ religious festival which would be the key to such cultural unity. But then, we cannot ignore the existence of the above-mentioned suppressed manuscripts for BT completely. The fact is that, despite his communitarian stance in BT, the youthful Nietzsche was clearly toying with individualistic thinking when he wrote the book, though he independently chose not to express it openly at the time, presumably for the sake of his commitment to communitarianism. Accordingly, whereas Young seemingly believes that the youthful

⁶ See Silk & Stern (1983): p. 43

Nietzsche possessed only communitarianism, I suggest that the youthful Nietzsche's thinking was actually a mixture of communitarianism and individualistic thinking, in which the former was given priority.

Now, contrary to Young, I also suggest that Nietzsche did not always maintain the religious communitarianism he presented in BT, and that such thinking is something exclusive to him in the early 'romantic' period. It is a widely acknowledged fact that, after attending the Bayreuth Festival, Nietzsche came to realise that Wagner's music-drama was nothing like a new 'communal' religious festival, and that this realisation ultimately led him to separate himself from Wagnerianism. And in my view, with this separation, which marks the end of his early period, Nietzsche eventually abandoned his religious communitarianism.

However, this does not mean that I am suggesting that the mature Nietzsche shook off all communitarian elements from his philosophy and embraced instead individualistic thinking alone. Rather, my view is that the balance between communitarianism and individualistic thinking in Nietzsche started to change after his separation from Wagnerianism and he began attaching far greater significance to individualistic thinking from the middle 'positivist' period onwards. For it is clear that, even after the early period, Nietzsche still continued to express his concern for the flourishing of community generally, in the shape of his persistent criticisms of contemporary Europe and the sickness of modernity. And, needless to say, Nietzsche at no point in his life ever wished for the decaying of community in any way. So, naturally, we still find some communitarian elements in his mature works, as Young has enumerated with force in his book.

However, what Young fails to recognise is the fact that, with this change in the balance between communitarianism and individualistic thinking in Nietzsche, his communitarianism naturally lost its significance, and consequently his view on the flourishing of community

changed its nature. That is, from the middle period onwards, what came to constitute the very backbone of Nietzsche's philosophy most decisively was no longer the communitarianism in which, as Young suggests, "the flourishing of individuals *presupposes* the flourishing of community", but instead a type of individualistic thinking in which the flourishing of community *presupposes* the flourishing of few exceptional individuals whose existence itself forms and shapes the cultural greatness of community, and whom Nietzsche calls 'higher types'.⁷

Indeed, immediately after BT, Nietzsche began to present openly the type of individualistic thinking he expressed in the suppressed manuscripts for BT, as he claims explicitly in UM that "the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars" (UM: II, 9). And it is simply an undeniable fact that we see the clear presence of such individualistic thinking constantly throughout his mature works, as he repeatedly discusses 'higher types' and expresses his anticipation for their emergence in various contexts.

To be sure, Young does not ignore the importance of 'higher types' for Nietzsche: he in fact acknowledges that Nietzsche greatly values those few exceptionally creative individuals. However, on the basis of his reading of Nietzsche as a life-long communitarian, Young claims that Nietzsche values higher types "only as a means to the flourishing of the social organism in its totality": "it is not the case that the social totality is valued for the sake of the higher types. Rather, the higher types are valued for the sake of the social totality".⁸ In fact, Young further claims that both 'higher types' *and* the 'herd type', the ordinary masses, are valued equally by Nietzsche, because Nietzsche "values, continues to value, social stability and cohesion at least as much as he values individual creativity", and that Nietzsche's real interest lies in "resolving

⁷ Young (2006): p. 2, *n.* 1

⁸ See Young (2006): pp. 3 & 135

the *tension*” between higher types – ‘individual creativity’ – and the herd type – ‘social stability and cohesion’ –, since the flourishing of community “consists in a dialectical interplay between the two”. Hence, Young writes, “As a *type* the exceptional individual is of no greater value than the ‘herd’ type, since the ‘virtuously stupid’ and the ‘free spirit’ are equally necessary to a flourishing community. As *individuals*, however, Nietzsche would certainly want to add, free spirits are of infinitely greater value, since while they are few and far between, herd-individuals are everywhere”.⁹

I think Young’s claim cannot be a correct interpretation of Nietzsche’s view, since Nietzsche clearly does not value both higher types and the ordinary masses equally in any sense. Certainly, as I said, even after his abandonment of his religious communitarianism, Nietzsche still continues to care about the flourishing of the community generally. And it is also true that he sometimes seems to suggest that the ordinary masses have a role to play in the flourishing of the community, as he speaks of them as being used as a stepping-stone for the flourishing of few exceptional individuals. But then, he also often insists that the masses hinder the appearance of exceptional individuals, that they are a serious impediment to the nurturing of higher types. Moreover, there are also many critical remarks he makes on the masses which strongly indicate that he does not recognise any intrinsic value in them, and that he considers them valuable, or rather ‘useful’ or simply ‘tolerable’, only insofar as they are means to the nurturing of higher types. On the other hand, he clearly considers those few exceptionally creative individuals to be intrinsically valuable, as he in his mature works increasingly values ‘creativity’ almost more than anything, certainly more than ‘social stability and cohesion’, insisting constantly how we must perform the ‘revaluation of all values’ and create new life-affirming values.

⁹ See Young (2006): pp. 88-89 & 97-98

Indeed, I think Tanner is right when he suggests that Nietzsche, who sometimes affects to “take a kind of god’s-eye view of the world”, seems to have become “wearied by ‘mass man’”, since “Nietzsche seems to think that a collection of extremely similar people would be as boring and superfluous as one of extremely similar works of art”.¹⁰ So, as we shall see in later chapters, Nietzsche in his mature works instead became increasingly interested in and fascinated by the existence of a few selected peculiar and exceptional individuals who brought something new, beautiful, intoxicating and life-affirming to the world, especially those historical figures with extraordinary creativity whose existence itself shaped the cultural greatness of their communities, such as Napoleon, Goethe and Beethoven.

Further, it is also clear to me that what Nietzsche’s mature texts, especially those written after his middle period, increasingly display are not only a sense of weariness concerning, and indifference towards, the existence of the masses, but also a profound sense of responsive ‘disgust’ towards the masses: “*Nausea* over man, over the “rabble,” was always my greatest danger” (EH: *Wise*, 8). Throughout his mature works, by using intensely corporeal vocabulary, he repeatedly portrays the images of the masses’ being something unclean and filthy, and of his being physically suffocated and nauseated by their bad smell: it almost gives the impression that what he finds repulsive is not just their spiritual mediocrity and pettiness, and that he actually thinks that he would be polluted and contaminated by their mere physical presence (see, e.g., GM: I, 12, III, 14 & AC: 38).

Accordingly, my view is that while Nietzsche’s thinking always was a mixture of communitarianism and individualistic thinking, it is individualistic thinking to which in his mature works he ultimately attached far greater significance, as he became much more concerned with the flourishing of few exceptional individuals than the flourishing of the

¹⁰ Tanner (2000): p. 95

community as a whole. And in fact, I argue that Young, in failing to recognise this significance of Nietzsche's individualistic thinking, which decisively constitutes the very backbone of his mature philosophy as a whole, also misinterprets the real positive aspects of the mature Nietzsche's philosophy of religion. That is, in my view, as Nietzsche eventually accepted the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest value, his positive religious thinking also came to change its shape and nature. And, contrary to Young's view, what Nietzsche ultimately came to focus on and value in his mature works is no longer the 'communal' life-affirming religious festival that can contribute towards the flourishing of 'community', but rather what I call 'the life-affirming type of gods', a certain type of 'gods' symbolised by the Olympian gods of ancient Greece, who can help individuals to flourish and thus contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'. I will come back to this later in the thesis.

Section B: Nietzsche and ‘war’

Now, through the rest of this chapter, I explain the exact nature of individualistic thinking I attribute to Nietzsche. For, though interpreting Nietzsche as an individualistic thinker has today become a dominant approach among commentators, there exist many different kinds of ‘individualist’ reading. To give a brief description at this point, my individualist reading is *not* what I call an ‘anti-political’ individualist reading that regards Nietzsche as an antipolitical thinker who only pursues his own flourishing without having any interest for the actual community. My reading is also *not* what I call a ‘militaristic’ aristocratic individualist reading that regards Nietzsche as a thinker who sets the nurturing of ‘higher types’ as his highest concern and aims to achieve it chiefly by militaristic means. And my reading is also *not* what I call a ‘political’ aristocratic individualist reading that regards Nietzsche as a proper political thinker with specific political ideals, who sets the nurturing of ‘higher types’ as his highest goal and strives to achieve that by establishing a particular kind of socio-political structure. Rather, my reading is an ‘un-militaristic’, ‘moderately political’ and ‘religious’ aristocratic individualist reading that regards Nietzsche both as a philosopher who shows concern for the reality of socio-political life yet does not possess a proper political philosophy which justifies and endorses specific political ideals, and as a religious thinker who sets the nurturing of ‘higher types’ as his highest goal and attempts to find the way to achieve it not in any militarism or politics but in a certain conception of ‘god[s]’.

Among Anglophone commentators, it was Kaufmann who first endorsed the ‘individualist’ reading. Presumably motivated from his personal sense of duty to separate Nietzsche from Nazism as much as possible, Kaufmann in his Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist interprets the “leitmotif of Nietzsche’s life and thought” as “the theme of the antipolitical

individual who seeks self-perfection far from the modern world”.¹ Another commentator who takes a similar line is Nehamas. Nehamas in his Nietzsche: Life as Literature interprets Nietzsche as a figure who is solely concerned with his own self-creation, arguing, “Nietzsche exemplifies through his own writing one way in which one individual may have succeeded in fashioning itself . . . This individual is none other than Nietzsche himself, who is a creature of his own texts . . . a literary character”.²

Now, I think such type of interpretation cannot be correct. To be sure, as I shall discuss in the following chapters, there is no doubt that Nietzsche is strongly concerned with the flourishing of individual life, or, more specifically, with individual ‘health’, mainly ‘psychological’ health but also to some degree ‘physical’ health, especially his own: so, he often likes to style himself as a ‘psychologist’ or a ‘physiologist’ rather than as a traditional philosopher who tackles abiding metaphysical or epistemological questions. And he is also clearly a thinker who attaches great importance to the value of ‘solitude’, as he himself was forced to live most of his mature life in solitude, far from life as an active member of a particular society, owing to his persistent illness. And he certainly claims in EH that he is “the last *anti-political* German” (EH: Wise, 3). But then, this does not mean that he is a completely isolated, disengaged, anti-political thinker. For, contrary to Nehamas’ deeply aestheticized interpretation of him as being purely interested in his own self-development, his writings clearly indicate that he is very much interested in the actual community and deeply concerned about the state of its culture. For instance, in his early unpublished essay TGS he specifically discusses the relation between ‘a community’ and ‘politics’, as he examines what constituted healthy politics in ancient Greece. And as I suggested, even after the early period, even after his

¹ Kaufmann (1974): p. 418

² Nehamas (1985): p. 8

abandonment of his religious communitarianism, he still continues to express his concern for the flourishing of community generally, in the shape of his persistent criticisms of contemporary Europe, especially the critical state of its culture, and the sickness of modernity. And though 'politics' is never a dominant theme in any of his published works, he still makes many remarks on socio-political issues, such as 'the state', 'democracy' and 'socialism'. In this sense, his thinking clearly possesses some political aspects.

This leads me to suggest that Nietzsche is not an 'antipolitical' individualist whose only interest lies in his own flourishing, but rather an elitist individualist, or, as it is commonly called, an 'aristocratic' individualist, who is chiefly concerned with the nurturing of few exceptional individuals whose existence itself forms the cultural greatness of the community, and whom Nietzsche describes as 'higher types'. Now, there are many commentators who consider such an exceptional individual to be not 'a higher type', but rather the individual whom Nietzsche famously calls the '*Übermensch*'. However, I find this approach problematic, since it seems to me that the conception of '*Übermensch*' is extremely underdeveloped by Nietzsche. Certainly, Nietzsche discusses the *Übermensch* repeatedly in Z. However, the fact is that not only does he hardly mention the *Übermensch* again in any of his later works, but also his discussion of the *Übermensch* in Z itself is pretty abstract and obscure. For instance, in Z he declares that the *Übermensch* is "the meaning of the earth" (*Z*: I, *Prologue*, 3). But then, he never really explains how exactly and in what sense the *Übermensch* will become 'the meaning of earth'. And while making many hyperbolic and somewhat poetical remarks on the *Übermensch*, he also fails to tell us basic matters such as what kinds of physical culture the *Übermensch* is to possess, what he would actually *do* with what Nietzsche clearly conceives of as his abundant energy, and so on. Accordingly, my view is that Nietzsche never worked out the conception of *Übermensch* properly, and thus that even an exhaustive study of the *Übermensch* will not really issue in a

fruitful outcome as it will involve a great deal of guesswork on our part. Hence, I choose to identify those few exceptional individuals not with the '*Übermenschen*' but with those whom Nietzsche calls 'higher types', since his remarks on 'higher types' are more extensively present throughout his mature works and less obscure: but, nevertheless, I think we could plausibly say that Nietzsche basically intended the *Übermensch* to be a sort of the ultimate type of 'higher types'.

One of the commentators who support an 'aristocratic' individualist reading is Appel. By understanding Nietzsche's sole concern to be "the flourishing of those few whom he considers exemplary of the human species", Appel argues that Nietzsche's highest aim is to establish "a new, aristocratic political order in Europe in which the herdlike majority . . . are . . . under the control of a self-absorbed master caste whose only concern is for the cultivation of its own excellence".³ A similar kind of reading is also provided by Lea. Lea argues that while anticipating positively the imminent catastrophe of bourgeois-Christian civilisation, Nietzsche aspired to "the formation of *élite*", the creation of an "*élite* of philosopher-kings, recruited from all classes" that is capable of changing the world. And though Nietzsche was against nationalism and race-hatred, he ultimately came to embrace "the force of militarism" as the means of creating and maintaining the supreme type of man, and "even went so far as to oppose all attempts to arrest the advance of democracy and socialism . . . since a mass-man would thereby be created who, when the hour struck, would fall like ripe fruit into the hands of the military". And Lea further claims that Nietzsche as "the new Goethe . . . would have his counterpart in a new Napoleon, who would succeed . . . in uniting Europe and ultimately the world . . . The new Napoleon . . . would lay the foundations of a super-State".⁴

³ Appel (1999): pp. 1-2

⁴ Lea (1993): pp. 295-299

Now, I think Lea is correct in some respects. For, while Nietzsche is generally very critical of democracy, it is true that he sometimes seemingly regards it as an essential precondition for the nurturing of ‘higher types’ of the future (see, e.g., BGE: 242). And it is also clear to me that Nietzsche’s individualist thinking does not in any way claim that individuals must be born into a certain social class to become ‘higher types’: I will discuss this in Chapter 4-A. However, I find Lea’s reading problematic, since not only does his argument for Nietzsche’s militarism rely too heavily upon the Nachlass to be plausible, but more fundamentally it is my view that, although Nietzsche often indicates his admiration for ‘war’, he never actually embraced any sort of militarism.

Let me start clarifying my view. There are passages in Nietzsche’s works that seem to indicate his affirmative attitude towards war. For example, he in Z writes, “You say it is the good cause that hallows even war? I say unto you: it is the good war that hallows any cause. War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of the neighbor” (Z: I, 10). Now, this passage is open to several possible interpretations. For instance, we can read it literally and interpret that what Nietzsche values is indeed ‘war’ itself, and thus that he is a proper militarist. However, I think such approach cannot be correct, since it clearly ignores the rhetorical context of the passage. That is, it fails to recognise the possibility that Nietzsche is here simply trying to make a critical point against the danger of Christian ‘pity’ founded on Christian love of one’s neighbours and not actually endorsing ‘war’ itself.

This leads us to another interpretation of the above passage, which is that we could instead suppose that, although Nietzsche does not affirm war itself, especially all the violence and blood accompanying war, he does affirm what an event like war brings out positively in us, namely ‘courage’ in this case. This interpretation seems more plausible. For, if we read other seemingly positive remarks Nietzsche makes on war in their context properly, they also seem to indicate

similarly that what he actually values is not necessarily war itself, but the type of heroic spirit, creative power and strong will expressed typically in war – what he sometimes calls ‘masculine virtues’ –, which are ultimately capable of evolving a new culture (see, e.g., HAH: I, 444, 477 & II, ii, 187). So, for instance, on this line of thought, it could be suggested that, while Nietzsche does not necessarily affirm or endorse all those atrocities Napoleon committed in war, he does value the scale of “a *force majeure* of genius and will . . . strong enough to create a unity out of Europe, a political and *economic* unity for the sake of a world government” found within the existence of Napoleon, which Napoleon typically expressed in war (see EH: CW, 2; also BGE: 208). Or to put it differently, what Nietzsche affirms is not necessarily the brutal and destructive aspect of Napoleon that is symbolised by all the atrocities he committed, but the creative and constructive aspect of Napoleon that is symbolised by his cultural achievements such as his establishment of the Napoleonic Code and his contribution towards the development of Egyptology.

Or, by taking a similar line, we could also suppose that, when Nietzsche talks about war affirmatively, he is not referring to ‘militaristic’ war, but simply to ‘intellectual’ war where different ideologies conflict with each other. This interpretation also seems to be not entirely implausible. For, as we will see in later chapters, there is no doubt that Nietzsche is a thinker who deeply fears the stagnation of culture and thus attaches great importance to ‘creativity’. He clearly recognises the necessity of tension or conflicts between different ideas and values that would naturally stimulate people’s creativity to establish new ideas and values and consequently encourage the evolution of culture: one of the key points of his criticism of modernity – and of Christianity, as we will see – is that we moderns are facing the stagnation of culture by lacking in these very tensions (see, e.g., TI: V, 3).

However, in my view, while all these interpretations are plausible and substantially correct to a great extent, there still remains one other extremely plausible way to interpret all those seemingly affirmative remarks Nietzsche makes on war. That is, we can also regard those remarks as expressing a genuinely positive sentiment towards war, and interpret him as being in fact greatly attracted to war, even though he is not a militarist. For, if we look at his texts generally, they clearly seem to display an undeniable fascination for violent images: for instance, what we perceive from the way all those cruel punishments of the old Germany – such as “stoning” and “breaking on the wheel” – are discussed in GM is hardly a sense of condemnation or horror or scholarly calmness, but rather a sense of fascinated attention (see GM: II, 3). And there is also no doubt that, as a naturalist, Nietzsche is deeply fascinated by war where one’s natural instincts of cruelty and aggression are exposed and expressed in their purest form, in the healthiest way (see BGE: 259 & GM: II, 6).⁵ Nonetheless, surely, expressing such fascination for war does not in any straightforward sense make him a militarist, since there is, after all, really nothing so unusual about it.

For instance, when Simone Weil, a Christian thinker, remarks that “war itself, especially as conducted in the old days, stirs man’s sense of beauty in a way that is vital and poignant”, it is quite clear that she is in no sense affirming war itself or valuing the way war brings out a sense of beauty in us.⁶ Rather, she is just stating pretty much what many of us think about war, namely war is ‘horrible’ and yet somehow ‘magnificent’. To give an example, I am not a militarist and never want to experience war. When I visit the Atomic Bomb Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, I am as all are totally horrified by all those exhibits that testify so vividly to how tragic and dreadful the reality of war can actually be. Yet, when I visit the Tokyo National

⁵ For a discussion on Nietzsche’s naturalism, see, e.g., Leiter (2002): pp. 3-29

⁶ Weil (2009): p. 107

Museum and stand in front of all those old Japanese samurai swords and armour on display, or when I watch Akira Kurosawa's films that portray bloody wars between samurai warriors, I, like many others, can reap intense pleasure from watching them and find them fascinatingly beautiful and magnificent. And this is evidently a sentiment that many share, given the canonical position Kurosawa occupies in the history of film. Despite knowing the reality of war to some degree, I can somehow admire war, especially old-style war. And this is surely a contradictory but fundamental aspect of human nature which many of us commonly share. This, indeed, must also be one of the reasons why war has always been a popular theme for paintings, novels and films. And in my view, Nietzsche, in his remarks on war, is doing exactly what Weil does. That is, Nietzsche, who often styles himself as a 'psychologist', is provoking us to recognise a basic psychological fact, namely, that, while being terrified at all those bloody atrocities accompanying war, we simultaneously cannot prevent ourselves from finding war itself awe-inspiringly beautiful, exciting and life-affirming in some way: there is something about war that naturally and almost forcibly drives our psychology to romanticise it.

Of course, we could criticise Nietzsche for over-romanticising war. And in my view, we are right to do so, since his writings clearly display a certain naivety in this context: and in a few other contexts too, as we will see. And his over-romanticisation of war may be in a way the expression of a certain stupidity. Further, we could also argue that his writings in this context also display a certain irresponsibility, for the problem is that while Nietzsche and Weil may indeed share the same sentiment towards war, compared with Weil's way of expressing it, the way – and the tone with which – Nietzsche expresses it can actually mislead people into believing that what is expressed here is the affirmation of war: this sort of irresponsibility is also strongly detectable in his treatments of other controversial issues such as 'slavery' and 'breeding', as I will discuss in the next section.

But, be that as it may, it also seems to me important to recognise that there exists a huge gulf between Nietzsche's understanding of war and ours. That is, it is an undeniable fact that the world and people's general view of war have changed significantly over the course of history, even since Nietzsche's time. As Staten puts it, "What we since yesterday have come to think of as outrage and atrocity is the normal fact of human history and has rarely interfered with the good conscience of its perpetrators, who could, as Nietzsche says, "emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a students' prank, convinced they have provide the poets with a lot more material for song and praise"".⁷

In Nietzsche's time, war was still very much a part of people's life, in the sense that it was accepted more widely and glorified more publicly than today. And compared to us moderns who have access to live coverage of war through television and the internet, most people in Nietzsche's time knew far less about what actually happens in the reality of war. Certainly, Nietzsche knew the reality of war to some degree, from his own experience of serving in the Franco-Prussian War as a medical orderly, by nursing injured soldiers. But, still, Nietzsche was a nineteenth-century German who did not experience the First and Second World Wars, and who never saw highly-technologised modern warfare. And in many and significant ways, it was precisely these World Wars that have radically and fundamentally changed many people's political and moral views of war. And if Nietzsche knew the destructive power of modern weapons and the merciless way they are being used today – nuclear weapons, push-button warfare, what is essentially indiscriminate bombing –, he would probably be far more circumspect in what he might say about war and its potential glory. Accordingly, it seems to me crucial, for understanding Nietzsche, that when we read his rather hyperbolic remarks on war,

⁷ Staten (1990): p. 80, quoting GM: I, 11

we should also try to be generous enough to read them in the context of the time and the situation in which he actually lived.

But, in any case, in my view, there is also enough evidence in his texts to suggest that Nietzsche was not a militarist. For instance, he remarks in HAH, “*To disarm while being the best armed*, out of an *elevation* of sensibility – that is the means to *real* peace, which must always rest on a disposition for peace . . . Better to perish than to hate and fear, and *twofold better to perish than to make oneself hated and feared* – this must one day become the supreme maxim of every individual state!” (HAH: II, ii, 284). While this very simplistic, unrealistic, over-optimistic view of peace typically demonstrates the occasional proclivity to naivety that his writings display in certain contexts, which I mentioned earlier, it also strongly suggests that Nietzsche was not a type of man who would or could embrace any sort of militarism in earnest. Indeed, as I will insist throughout this thesis, my view is that despite the critical stand against Christian ‘pity’ and ‘compassion’, as well as a liking for violent images, both of which his texts display, Nietzsche’s fundamental temperament was one of gentleness and sympathy. He indeed confesses himself to be extremely sensitive to others’ suffering: “I know . . . that I only need to expose myself to the sight of some genuine distress and I am lost. And if a suffering friend said to me, “Look, I am about to die; please promise me to die with me,” I should promise it; and the sight of a small mountain tribe fighting for its liberty would persuade me to offer it my hand and my life” (GS: 338).

Section C: Nietzsche and ‘politics’

There is one other aspect of Lea’s reading that I find objectionable. And this objection also applies to Appel’s reading I mentioned in the previous section, which regards Nietzsche’s highest aim as the establishment of “a new, aristocratic political order in Europe”.¹ That is, fundamentally, I find the type of ‘individualist’ reading provided by these commentators too deeply politicised to be plausible.

Over the last few decades, the attempt to portray Nietzsche as a political thinker with a vision of future politics has become a popular theme among some commentators. For instance, Ansell-Pearson claims that “Nietzsche is a thinker preoccupied with the fate of politics in the modern world. One has only to take a glance at his wide-ranging concerns . . . to realize that Nietzsche is a ‘political’ thinker first and foremost”.² By regarding Nietzsche as such, these commentators have also attempted to situate his thinking on politics in the context of modern political philosophy, to produce a systematic overview of his supposed ‘political philosophy’. And some of them have tried to demonstrate how Nietzsche’s political philosophy justifies the ideals of the political ‘right’, that is, how he possesses and endorses some specific political ideals or goals.³

This is not a surprising phenomenon, given the fact that people who have been inspired by Nietzsche’s thinking include anarchists, Nazis, Socialists and Marxists:⁴ so, his thinking has been appropriated by various political groups for their own political ideology.⁵ However, I find

¹ Appel (1999): pp. 1-2

² See Ansell-Pearson (1994): p. 2

³ See, e.g., Warren (1988), Detwiler (1990) & Schutte (1986): Chapter 7

⁴ See Aschheim (1994): p. 7

⁵ For discussions on this matter, see Thomas (1983) & Strong (1996)

those commentators' attempts problematic, for although I do not consider Nietzsche an anti-political thinker, it seems to me doubtful whether he possesses what can be properly described as a systematic political philosophy or theory that justifies certain political ideals. Indeed, my view is that he does not possess a political philosophy or theory as such, and thus that he cannot be classified as a proper political thinker, in the sense that Hobbes and Rawls are proper political thinkers whereas Kant and Heidegger are not.

Let me start clarifying my view. One of the problems I have with those commentators who consider Nietzsche a political thinker is that their arguments often rely too heavily upon the Nachlass to be plausible.⁶ But more fundamentally, what I find objectionable is the way they often ignore the distinction between 'politics' and 'communal life'. For instance, Strong claims, that,

as the first essay in the *Genealogy* makes clear, moral systems and politics are codetermined. Since the very existence of moral categories depended on the desire to assert power over another group of people – and under slave morality to *control* and render them predictable – all morality is fundamentally a form of politics. It is possible to understand Nietzsche's fulminations against modern politics in the same light as those against morality.⁷

Now, Nietzsche's criticism of politics is in a sense connected with his criticism of morality. For instance, he criticises democrats and socialists by pointing out that what exists at the basis of their will and outcry for equality is their vengefulness against everything that has power, which is rooted in their "aggrieved conceit" and "repressed envy" (see Z: II, 7). And this kind of

⁶ See, e.g., Detwiler (1990) & Schutte (1986)

⁷ Strong (2000): p. 189

psychology is what he also recognises to exist behind the establishment of 'slave morality', typified by Christian morality. However, the problem with Strong's claim is that he fails to recognise how people can be controlled without 'politics' or 'morality'. That is, fundamentally, a group of people can assert power over another group simply by its physical force, by its brute strength. Moreover, Strong also fails to recognise that a phenomenon of people grouping together does not necessarily mean 'politics', that is, 'a communal life' does not automatically entail 'a political life'. For it is surely the case that what could be properly described as 'a political life' can only come into existence if there first exist in a community not just 'morality' but also such elements as 'laws', 'institutions' and 'economic principles'. For instance, my college is a community where people group together under a certain ethos or values or aims which they all share. Being situated in Great Britain, the college could be regarded as a part of British politics in a broad sense, since its existence and its actions possess certain political implications. But then, clearly, the college is not by itself 'a political organisation' and the college life is not 'a political life', for the reason that it lacks all the above-mentioned elements. And the fact is that Nietzsche never, in any part of his works, fully explain what exactly 'politics' is, or what precisely constitutes the 'political'. This, I think, gives us good reason to suspect that what Nietzsche discusses in his work is not really 'politics' but essentially something more like 'communal life'.

Another problem I have with those commentators is the way they tend to overestimate the significance of Nietzsche's remarks on politics. In fact, this tendency is not something exclusive to those commentators. For instance, Staten, a commentator who does not necessarily consciously aim to portray Nietzsche as a political thinker, claims that Nietzsche's "political statements are not just casual or ancillary remarks in Nietzsche's text; they are intimately woven

into the texture of his thought in its entirety”.⁸ Now, it is easily understandable where Staten’s claim comes from, since Nietzsche does talk about ‘politics’ repeatedly. But what Staten, and all those commentators who regard Nietzsche as a political thinker, seem to ignore is the fact that unlike those thinkers who are widely recognised to be political thinkers proper, Nietzsche does not at all provide a detailed account of various political issues. That is, in Nietzsche’s works, there is a total absence of in-depth investigations into basic political conceptions and issues such as ‘labour’, ‘law’, ‘taxation’ and ‘citizenship’, which we find in the works of properly political thinkers.

Likewise, although Nietzsche often expresses his negative attitude towards ‘democracy’, he never makes a serious attempt to criticise democracy thoroughly and systematically in the way properly political thinkers do. His criticism of democracy is clearly limited, since what he focuses on is not democracy as a whole, inclusive of its structures, institutions and operation, but merely a particular aspect of democracy. That is, what he criticises is chiefly the egalitarian aspect of democracy, its conviction in the intrinsic qualitative equality of individuals that is founded on the presupposition of the homogenous nature of all individuals and their interests, which, according to him, originated in the Christian ‘slave’ morality, specifically from its aspiration to be universalised.

Nietzsche’s criticism of Christian ‘slave’ morality will be discussed later in the thesis. But, in brief, Nietzsche believes that people create or accept moralities because each of them “instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend all its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power” (GM: III, 7). And he also believes that such ‘an optimum of favorable conditions’ varies from individual to individual, since he as a naturalist recognises the existence of naturally different ‘character-types’ among individuals:

⁸ Staten (1990): p. 78

each individual is born with different characteristics and temperaments, possessing different needs and interests. So, in his view, moralities as a means of maximising one's feeling of power are something that should not be universalised: a morality that is beneficial for a certain 'character-type' can be harmful to another 'character-type'. On the basis of such view, his criticism of democracy as the logical consequence of Christian 'slave' morality focuses almost exclusively on the egalitarian aspect of democracy, its forceful qualitative equalisation of all individuals, which, he believes, is an impediment to the nurturing of 'higher types', and thus is one of the chief reasons for the decadence of contemporary 'life' and 'culture'. Consequently, other aspects of democracy, for example, the negative effects democracy may have on 'economy' – such as the means of production and the distribution of capital – and on 'political life' itself – such as administration and legislation – are largely ignored by him.

This point I am making is actually recognised by some of those commentators who – more sensibly than others – try to portray Nietzsche as a political thinker. For instance, I think Warren is indeed right when he observes,

Nietzsche views liberal democratic political culture as little more than a secularized development of Christian culture. Nietzsche was either unaware of or chose to ignore essential differences, such as those having to do with the rise of market economy and the development of bureaucratic organizations. While these developments certainly have dimensions related to Christian-moral culture, they are not reducible to them . . . Thus while Nietzsche's approach may yield important insights, he cannot be said to be a critic of liberal democracy in any comprehensive sense.⁹

⁹ Warren (1988): pp. 213-214

It is clear that, unlike properly political thinkers, Nietzsche does not criticise democracy in the precise context of 'politics'. Instead, he treats it in the much wider and vaguer context of 'life'. As he claims, "the democratic movement is not only a form of the decay of political organization but a form of the decay, namely the diminution, of man, making him mediocre and lowering his value" (BGE: 203).

But, in my view, even Warren is susceptible to the above-mentioned tendency to overestimate the significance of Nietzsche's remarks on politics, and misreads the extent of *actual* political implications those remarks have: which leads us to one other problem I have with those commentators who consider Nietzsche a political thinker. That is, all those commentators commonly claim that Nietzsche justifies and endorses both the overthrow of democracy and the subsequent establishment of an authoritarian hierarchical society as his own political goal. So, for instance, Warren claims that Nietzsche "thought that societies should be ruled by superior individuals rather than democratically. . . . As a conservative Nietzsche was self-consciously political in the sense of desiring a hierarchical, ascriptive society in the future".¹⁰ However, contrary to those commentators' claim, it seems to me doubtful whether Nietzsche actually endorses any specific political goal.

Certainly, Nietzsche criticises democracy, and makes many positive remarks on hierarchical societies, often by idealising the hierarchical society of ancient Greece. But, if these remarks are read faithfully in their rhetorical context, it seems to me clear that they are more often made simply as a means to illuminate negatives he finds in an egalitarian democratic society. That is, through these remarks, he is merely acknowledging that he considers a hierarchical society a better form of society than a democratic society for the promotion of culture, because, compared to the latter whose forceful qualitative equalisation of all individuals largely denies the

¹⁰ Warren (1988): p. 212

possibility of the existence of few strong ‘higher types’, the former at least respects the existence of natural qualitative inequalities, and thus provides more favourable conditions for the potential ‘higher types’ to show their potentiality.

Moreover, in my view, even if Nietzsche was trying to justify a hierarchical society as his own political ideal, his justification is nothing like what could be properly classified as a justification provided by a political thinker. That is, compared with all those properly political thinkers whose justification of what they consider to be the best form of society are extensive and critical, examining a wide range of political and economical issues from various angles, Nietzsche’s justification of a hierarchical society is clearly limited and partial. His descriptions of the nature of hierarchical society, such as the relation between masters and slaves or the relation between a master and another master, are so extremely brief and obscure that it is hard to see how such a society is supposed to function in reality: I think Schutte is correct when she suggests that “Nietzsche’s authoritarian interpretation of an order of rank is an artificial and intellectually unacceptable doctrine based on a rigorously oversimplified view of reality”, and that “there is “a highly anti-critical streak” in Nietzsche’s *entire* political theory of the “order of rank” and the practical applications derived from it”.¹¹ Indeed, just as with his over-optimist view of ‘peace’ I mentioned before, his discussion of politics is generally very simplistic and unrealistic, as well as too abstract and too generalised. Looking at the way he talks about politics, it seems as if he thinks that there are only two kinds of politics, namely one that leads to a ‘strong’ culture and the other that leads to a ‘weak’ culture. In fact, it might be reasonably said that the level of description of political issues he provides in his works is nothing like what we expect to find in the works of political thinkers but more like what we expect to find in the

¹¹ Schutte (1986): pp. 184 & 186. Yet, despite this suggestion, Schutte still overestimates the significance of Nietzsche’s remarks on ‘politics’ and ends up claiming Nietzsche’s “political goals” to be the establishment of “highly authoritarian systems of government” and “the crushing of democracy” (see Schutte 1986: p. 161).

works of novelists, in the sense that he in his works seems to be dealing not with political ‘reality’ but rather with political ‘idea’, just as, for instance, what Dickens focuses on in his novels is not really the ‘reality’ of London, but more like an ‘idea’ of London: I shall explain this point in Chapter 2-A.

Of course, we cannot completely deny the possibility that Nietzsche might have secretly wished to re-establish a type of hierarchical society which resembles the ancient Greek *polis*. For, in my view, along with the occasional proclivity to naivety in certain contexts that I pointed out before, his writings also display susceptibility to a nostalgic mood from time to time. And in the light of both the critical attitude towards democracy and the admiration for ancient Greece that we find throughout his writings, it seems to me likely that he did long for the re-establishment of such a hierarchical society, especially when his texts display a nostalgic mood. But then, when the approach is more neutral, more ‘realistic’, he clearly seems to recognise that it is simply not possible for us moderns to return to such a hierarchical society. As he claims explicitly in TI, “a reversion, a return in any sense or degree is simply not possible”, including that to “a former measure of virtue” (TI: IX, 43). Indeed, while in his works he often positively talks about ‘master morality’, a life-affirming type of morality typically found among the aristocrats of ancient hierarchical societies, he also repeatedly makes it clear that what he truly wants us to accomplish is the establishment of new set of original – life-affirming – values through the ‘revaluation of all values’. Further, while at one point he claims that an aristocratic hierarchical society has always been and will always be an indispensable precondition for “[e]very enhancement of the type “man”” (see BGE: 257), which presumably includes the nurturing of ‘higher types’, he elsewhere seems to deny this by suggesting that historically the emergence of ‘great men’ is fundamentally “accidental” and has been rarely influenced by “the environment” or “the age” (see TI: IX, 44; also BGE: 274).

Nietzsche sometimes describes his philosophy as “a hammer” (see TI: *Preface* & XI). And he claims, “The last thing *I* should promise would be to “improve” mankind. No new idols are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean. *Overthrowing idols* (my word for “ideals”) – that comes closer to being part of my craft” (EH: *Preface*, 2). Now, this claim of his is problematic, since he, in one way or the other, clearly did try to ‘improve’ mankind and did try to erect new ‘ideals’, as we will see: and we could also wonder here, whether, if he were actually trying to justify the re-establishment of an old type of hierarchical society in the modern world, it would amount to erecting a new ‘political’ ideal. Nevertheless, it is true that Nietzsche did spend a great deal of time and energy trying to ‘*overthrow*’ various ideals, including ‘political’ ideals. But then, however much he may have been unhappy about contemporary politics, however much he may have disliked democracy, it seems to me clear that he was not seriously interested in a world revolution, by actually smashing down democracy. At best, he was only trying to undermine and make us question what he considers to be our fundamental erroneous beliefs in the values of certain political ideals.

In fact, in my view, while Nietzsche is undoubtedly being genuine when he criticises democracy and praises a hierarchical society, there is still something technical and somewhat superficial and casual about his attitude towards ‘politics’. What I mean by this is that, at one level, Nietzsche’s examinations of political issues, including his criticism of democracy, are partial and limited, in the sense that they are conducted only to the extent where those political issues are relevant to his criticism of Christianity. At another level, it seems to me likely that, despite the harsh and aggressive tone of his criticism of democracy, Nietzsche’s worries in this area are less to be traced to problems with democracy than he likes to imagine, and that, like any denizen of a democratic system, he is a beneficiary of some of the significant goods it provides. Of course in his works he simply fails to acknowledge these goods or chooses to ignore them,

which, again, makes his criticism of democracy partial and limited. And in many ways, though he undoubtedly finds democracy objectionable and problematic in some respects, his hostility towards democracy bears all the hallmarks of personal frustration, a projection of his own dissatisfaction with himself, the sort of feeling of aggression which any reflective citizen of a democratic society is likely to experience at times and which conflates personal dissatisfaction with political critique – which is not to say, of course, that, at other times, these cannot be kept apart.

This point I am trying to make might be better illustrated by citing another example. One notable element of Nietzsche's works that disturbs us is what appears to be his affirmative attitude towards the necessity of 'slavery', which is first expressed in his early unpublished essay TGS: "we must learn to identify as a cruel-sounding truth the fact that *slavery belongs to the essence of a culture*" (TGS: p. 166). And even in his published works, he makes similar remarks on 'slavery'. For instance, he claims in a section of BGE,

Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society – and it will be so again and again – a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata – when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance – that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown either – the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching more comprehensive states (BGE: 257).

Now, the question we ought to ask is what Nietzsche means by ‘distance’ and ‘slavery in some sense or other’ in this passage. Those commentators who consider Nietzsche a political thinker tend to interpret them in a socio-political sense: ‘distance’ as what is created by a particular socio-political structure, and thus ‘slavery’ as an economic arrangement.¹² Certainly, the fact that Nietzsche in the same section of BGE describes the origin of aristocratic society as a “hard” truth and says that “one should not yield to humanitarian illusions” prompts us to think that those commentators are actually right (see BGE: 257). And there are also other factors in Nietzsche’s works that prompt us to think in this way. For instance, many of us are horrified by Nietzsche’s aristocratic individualist thinking in which the *raison d’être* of the masses is the production of few exceptional individuals, because such elitist thinking fails to conform to the fundamental belief in the equality of all individuals in their rights, dignity and worth, which we, the denizens of democratic societies, have become so accustomed to accepting as an unshakable norm. Coupled with this lack of egalitarian premise in Nietzsche’s thinking, many of us are also disturbed by language he employs to describe the social masses, such as ‘rabble’, ‘mob’ and sometimes even “the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned” (GM: I, 11). These ways of speaking are in themselves abusive. Further, if we combine these abusive ways of speaking with Nietzsche’s talk of ‘cultivation’ (*Züchtung*) or ‘breeding’ (*Züchtung*) of a higher human race as a new powerful ruling caste and interpret them all together literally in socio-political, physical and biological sense (see BGE: 251, AC: 3 & EH: *BT*, 4),¹³ we are tempted to think that Nietzsche is also affirmatively talking about ‘eugenics’, which many of us now reject as an inhumane practice: so, for instance, Schutte, who seemingly interprets Nietzsche’s talks of

¹² See Ansell-Pearson (1994): p. 4, Schutte (1986): pp. 162-169 & Warren (1988): p. 225

¹³ As Kaufmann points out, the German term ‘*Züchtung*’, which he often translates as ‘cultivation’ or ‘breeding’, has both cultural and biological connotations. It suggests ‘breeding’ “both in the sense of education and of “breeding” animals” (Kaufmann 1974: p. 304).

‘cultivation’ literally in such sense, remarks that “it would be preferable to disregard this aspect of Nietzsche’s theory”.¹⁴ In this way, we might conclude that Nietzsche seems to be affirming ‘eugenics’, so why not ‘slavery’ too.

Traditionally, the most popular approach taken by commentators is to de-politicise all those questionable ideas and ways of speaking of Nietzsche’s, that is, to suppose that when Nietzsche affirmatively talks about ‘distance’, ‘slavery’ and ‘cultivation’, or when he uses abusive language such as ‘rabble’ and ‘ill-constituted’, he means them purely in ‘*psychological*’ or ‘*spiritual*’ sense. And in my view, this kind of approach is correct to a great extent. For, as I will argue in Chapter 4-A, although in the context of his discussion about the origin of different types of morality the terms such as ‘the masters’ and ‘the slaves’ are used in socio-political sense, he elsewhere, in other contexts, generally intends those terms to apply to one’s *psychological* characteristics. And in his many positive discussions of ‘the masters’, what he places the greatest emphasis on is not the masters’ physical and political characteristics, but the masters’ *psychological* strength and health, their *spiritual* superiority over the slaves: in the same section of BGE quoted above, he explicitly says, “In the beginning, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their predominance did not lie mainly in physical strength but in strength of the soul” (BGE: 257). Likewise, there is also no doubt that Nietzsche generally uses abusive language such as ‘rabble’ and ‘the ill-constituted’ to describe one’s *psychological* or *spiritual* status, particularly what he perceives to be the shamefully ‘unhealthy’ condition of the spirit of modern men: so, at certain places, he uses such a term as “ill-constituted soul” (GM: I, 12).

Still, in my view, it is unlikely that Nietzsche never affirmatively used such terms as ‘slavery’ and ‘cultivation’ in anything other than *psychological* or *spiritual* sense. For instance,

¹⁴ Schutte (1986): p. 161

when he says ‘slavery’ in the above-quoted passage of TGS, it is evidently clear that he means it literally in ‘socio-political’ sense and seriously regards it as ‘the essence of a culture’. Likewise, when he in BGE remarks that “Slavery is, as it seems, both in the cruder and in the more subtle sense, the indispensable means of spiritual discipline and cultivation” (BGE: 188), though he is certainly using the term ‘cultivation’ in *spiritual* sense, by ‘slavery . . . in the cruder . . . sense’ he surely must mean ‘slavery’ as an economic arrangement.

So, does Nietzsche actually endorse ‘slavery’ in a socio-political sense? In the light of my earlier suggestion that we take Nietzsche at his word and read him as harbouring an extreme sensitivity to others’ suffering, not always explicitly acknowledged by him, it is difficult to imagine him ever endorsing slavery in earnest. Then how should we interpret his seemingly affirmative remarks on slavery?

In one way, we could say that it is one thing to talk positively about slavery, but it is another actually to endorse slavery. And given that Nietzsche does not really possess any political ideal, and that his discussion of politics is founded on an ‘over-simplified view of reality’, it could be plausibly supposed that his affirmative remarks on ‘slavery’ have no *actual* political implications.

In another way, we could also suppose that Nietzsche is simply indicating a brutal fact he has discovered through disinterested observation: namely, the prosperity of society and its culture always inevitably requires the sacrifice of many in some sense or in some way. And this also seems to be a plausible interpretation, since it is true that almost every ancient society with a great culture did possess slavery and their prosperity was probably helped by it to some degree: because there existed numerous slaves who were forced to sacrifice themselves to do all dirty work, there existed those few who were able to devote themselves solely to creativity.

Another interpretation is provided by Staten, who suggests that Nietzsche's treatment of 'slavery' is a form of self-preservation Nietzsche employs to cope with the spectacle of nihilistic history. According to Staten, Nietzsche, who "cannot bear his vision of the savagery and meaninglessness of history", aspires to be the "most powerful and tremendous nature" (UM: II, 1) who "would not be overwhelmed at all by the historical sense but could absorb all of the past", who "could confront the overwhelming expanse of what has been and say yes to all of it". But Nietzsche cannot accept either the Christian 'teleological' strategy that tries to "recuperate the suffering of history by projecting a divine plan that assigns it a reason now and a recompense later", or Left liberalism's 'teleological' strategy that packages the brute fact of suffering of history in "a new narrative, a moral narrative according to which all those lives ground up in the machine of history are assigned an intelligible role as victims of oppression and injustice". For, these strategies are essentially founded on "a sense of shared suffering, *Mitleid*" – one can equally feel the pain other feels –, and since Nietzsche is "an extraordinarily, almost incredibly, sensitive substance", if he opens himself to the sense of shared suffering, he would be overwhelmed by "an unbearable flood of suffering" that history throws at him. Hence, Staten interprets Nietzsche's remarks on 'slavery' in TGS as Nietzsche's own strategy to manage the painful reality of human history: "Nietzsche . . . does not "praise" slavery as an economic arrangement; he seizes upon it as a desperate expedient in his flight from the nihilistic despair at the spectacle of history".¹⁵

I find Staten's interpretation plausible, as it harmonises with my reading of Nietzsche as one acutely sensitive to human suffering. Moreover, as we will see later, it is also clearly the case that Nietzsche throughout his life, but particularly in his mature years, increasingly became acutely aware of the enormity of human suffering that constitutes human history. And he always

¹⁵ See Staten (1990): pp. 78-85

had a hostile attitude towards ‘moral’ interpretations of the existence of those human sufferings, as he always believed that ‘life’ – including those sufferings – is something that can never be justified satisfactorily in traditional ‘moral’ terms. In fact, this position of his was stiffened further in his mature years, as he came to insist increasingly that the Christian ‘moral’ and ‘teleological’ justification of human existence as a whole, including its conception of a transcendent purpose of life founded on the idea of a perfect afterlife and all the Christian moralised conceptions such as those of ‘guilt’ and ‘sin’ that it imposes on people, is not just implausible but also unhealthy and life-denying.

Furthermore, in my view, Staten also points out something important: namely “the tone of horrified fascination with which Nietzsche presents his observations [of the necessity of slavery]”.¹⁶ Indeed, while Nietzsche’s writings generally express a sense of horror at the enormity of suffering human history contains, they also sometimes display a tendency to try to grasp the dreadful spectacle of it as something thrilling and magnificent in some way. And in this context, as we will see in Chapter 4-A, Nietzsche is often inclined to affirm a certain brutal way of life that involves the exploitation and sacrifice of the weak, the sort of way of life led by Napoleon and Caesar, as a form of self-preservation, a means of coping with the existence of suffering and his sensitivity towards it.

Earlier in this chapter, I pointed out that Nietzsche’s writings display an occasional proclivity to naivety in certain contexts, a liking for violent images, and occasional susceptibility to a nostalgic mood. And here, my suggestion is that, in dealing with those questionable issues such as his affirmative attitude towards slavery, these characteristics of his must be taken into account fully. For, in my view, one notable factor that sets Nietzsche apart from many other Western philosophers is the ‘personal’ nature of his writings: as Santaniello

¹⁶ Staten (1990): p. 83

puts it, “his writings are deeply personal and thus cannot be severed from history and his life experiences”.¹⁷

Generally speaking, as Hamilton observes, many of the Western philosophers, particularly those academic philosophers who engage themselves in the pursuit of some sort of final ‘truth’, have traditionally striven to write “in an impersonal manner as if they were not individuals with specific concerns”. That is, they commonly strive to write “in an impersonal voice of reason or pure intellect . . . , a voice which is no particular person’s voice”. And they do so, largely because they suppose that the truth is something that “is revealed to an eye which is untainted by any personal concerns and is revealed in a voice which is fair to all competing views of the world and thus arrives at the one true account”.¹⁸

However, Nietzsche in BGE criticises these traditional philosophers for being “not honest enough in their works”, since, he argues, what exists at the bottom of “their real opinions”, which they claim to be “truths” that are discovered through their reason or pure intellect alone, is actually “an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of “inspiration” – most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract” (see BGE: 5). In fact, elsewhere in BGE, he claims, that “Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (BGE: 6).

If we are to take seriously these claims of his and apply them to his own philosophy, we could plausibly suggest that Nietzsche is a philosopher who, far from trying to become the universal ‘impersonal’ voice of reason, does not hesitate to write in his own ‘personal’ voice. That is, unlike those traditional philosophers, he recognises and acknowledges openly the fact

¹⁷ Santaniello (1994): p. 4

¹⁸ See Hamilton (2001): p. 3. For writing this part, I have also widely referred to the whole ‘Introduction’ (pp. 1-14) of the same book.

that one's views and beliefs are not just reached by one's reason alone, but also inevitably rooted in and often significantly shaped by one's own specific existence, which is filled with various 'personal' and – thus, inevitably, also to some degree – 'socio-historical' prejudice, interest, emotion, experience, circumstance, and so on. Hence, while Nietzsche no doubt attempts to present in his writings what he considers to be truthful views of matters by using his reason and intellect to a great extent, he does so not as “the impersonal mind of reason”, but “as someone in the thick of existence with his own concerns and interests”,¹⁹ that is, as an individual with his unique and often complicated personality, temperament and life experiences, who is very much living a unique life at a certain place in a certain age. As such, compared with those traditional philosophers' writings, Nietzsche's writings are often in nature more closely connected to his own individual characteristics: his philosophical views and thoughts are more deeply bound up and invested with his personal experiences, circumstances, needs, desires, moods, feelings, emotions, inclinations, tastes, senses and so on.

Now, there are many commentators who fail to recognise or refuse to acknowledge the 'personal' nature of Nietzsche's writings – at least partly because Nietzsche sometimes appears to try to draw a line between himself and his writings (see GM: III, 4 & EH: *Books*, 1). One of such commentators is Nehamas. By referring to Nietzsche's above-mentioned claim of “every great philosophy” being “the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (BGE: 6), Nehamas criticises those who think that this claim “expresses a naive psychohistorical reductionism: that is, that Nietzsche believes that to understand what a philosophical view “really” means is to locate some specific events in its author's life which, in some sense, explain why that author held that particular view”. And Nehamas continues, “An especially crude version of this approach, for example, would claim that Nietzsche came to his

¹⁹ Hamilton (2001): p. 4

famous view of the death of God because he always resented his father's early death and the fact that he had no male authority figure to look up to while he was a child".²⁰

Like Nehamas, I certainly reject any immoderate reductive approach that attributes the full significance of Nietzsche's philosophical views solely to some specific biographical facts of his, since his philosophical views are clearly more than that: they are not something *merely personal*. Rather, in my view, Nietzsche's writings, his philosophical views, are 'personal' precisely in the sense that they are born out of his experience of life under the impact of his self-reflection. That is, for instance, though Montaigne in his Essays constantly talks about himself, because he does so in a non-reductive way, he is also essentially talking about us, about certain features of human existence which he and we both commonly experience and recognise. Likewise, though Nietzsche's writings are deeply founded on his own life experiences and thus clearly possess a personal existential dimension, he draws and reflects on his own life and experience in such a way that they appeal to general features of human life and illuminate the general human condition, so that his writings, his philosophical views, are 'personal' but not *merely personal*: they do apply and can appeal to us all.

However, at the same time, there seems to me to be one other important factor that we have to keep in mind, which adds a further complication to the fraught business of reading and interpreting Nietzsche's texts. That is to say, there are commentators who assume that what we find in Nietzsche's works is the *real* 'Nietzsche'. They assume that Nietzsche is all about what we read in his works, and that the philosophy he develops in his works, or more broadly, what he argues and remarks in his works, is the one and only true reflection both of who 'Nietzsche' as the individual *really* is and of what 'Nietzsche' *really* thinks and believes, and that it is only on this that we ought to focus. However, I think their assumption cannot be correct, since the

²⁰ See Nehamas (1985): pp. 127-128

fact is that the ‘Nietzsche’ we find in his works is different from the ‘Nietzsche’ we find in his personal letters. For instance, one of the images of ‘Nietzsche’ presented by his works is a self-confident, hard and cold-hearted thinker, who speaks haughtily and takes a very critical stand against the Christian ‘pity’. But, on the other hand, one of the images of ‘Nietzsche’ presented by his personal letters is a gentle, sensitive and warm-hearted man, who is always very polite, kind and sympathetic to others and can be tormented by self-doubt.²¹

So, clearly, we cannot regard the philosophy Nietzsche develops in his works as the one and only true reflection of the *real* ‘Nietzsche’, and in order to understand who the *real* ‘Nietzsche’ is, we must take both of these two different sets of images of him into consideration to some degree.²² And this means that we also cannot always take every claim Nietzsche makes in his works at its face value, interpreting it literally as what ‘Nietzsche’ *really* thinks and believes, i.e. as his all things considered opinion or truthful view of a matter. Indeed, Nietzsche says in BGE, “Every philosophy also *conceals* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask” (BGE: 289). If we are to take seriously this claim of his and apply it to his own philosophy, we could reasonably suppose that there could well be cases where Nietzsche says something without really believing it, or he says something because he wants to believe it, or he is simply playing with an idea and trying it out in a certain mood. Or, to put it another way, it is possible that “There is much in his writing that is merely personal, having nothing to do with philosophy at all”.²³

Taking all these points into consideration, it seems to me very likely that Nietzsche believed in the necessity of ‘war’, or of ‘the order of castes’ and ‘slavery’ in a socio-political sense, or of ‘cultivation’ in a biological sense, only when in a nostalgic mood. Or rather, it may be more

²¹ See, e.g., Fraser (2002): p. 87

²² For a discussion on this, see, e.g., Benson (2008): p. vii-xvi

²³ Danto (2005): p. 182

accurate to say that, in experimenting with these ideas without actually believing in them, Nietzsche expressed a kind of nostalgia, the nostalgia being, indeed, a sign that he was, in fact, experimenting with these ideas and did not, in some straightforward sense, simply accept them.

As it is evident from both his published and unpublished works, Nietzsche was a very frustrated man, whose persistent illness forced him to endure throughout his mature years an extremely confined, constrained, inactive and solitary life. In the light of this fact, and also in the light of both the penchant for violent images and the very partial and limited nature of the criticism of democracy that we find in his texts, it seems to me plausible that his ideas of ‘war’, ‘slavery’ and ‘cultivation’ in socio-political and biological sense, as well as his criticism of ‘democracy’, were, to a certain extent, something that had deep roots in his personal condition, and constituted a stratagem to cope with that condition.

And it also seems to me to be the case that, when susceptible to the charms of nostalgia, Nietzsche often became strangely swept away by ideas of ‘war’, ‘slavery’ and ‘cultivation’. Anat Pick, in her discussion of Werner Herzog’s films, describes GM as a “cinematic” book. She remarks,

Of Herzog’s characters whose humanity is in some way contested, it is the slick brutality of Klaus Kinski that is most philosophically resonant, modeled as it seems to me with uncanny precision on Nietzsche’s “beast of prey” (*das Raubthier*) from *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887). The *Genealogy* is an anthropological fantasy on human evolution from its beginnings as amoral, joyous, and beastly to its subsequent domestication by a meek and degenerate priestly class. . . . Read today, not only is the *Genealogy* a remarkably cinematic text, but, in keeping with Herzog’s poetic license with regard to historical truths, also intensely speculative and fictional.²⁴

²⁴ Pick (2011): p. 153

I find Pick's remark insightful, because Nietzsche clearly seems to me to have possessed deeply 'cinematic' imagination. As we typically see from the description of "the old German punishments" in GM – "tearing apart or trampling by horses . . . , boiling of the criminal in oil or wine . . . , cutting flesh from the chest, and also the practice of smearing the wrongdoer with honey and leaving him in the blazing sun for the flies" (see GM: II, 3) –, or of the brutal and bestial 'men of prey' in GM – to whom "a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, torture" is a source of innocent exhilaration (see GM: I, 11) –, or of the ancient 'Dionysian festivals' in BT – whose effect of "*intoxication*" brings out in people the "horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty" (see BT: 1-2) –, his texts have a generally deeply 'visual' quality that grips one's imagination. And it seems to me very likely that his 'cinematic' imaginations of 'war', 'slavery' and 'cultivation' often swept him away. And once he was deeply gripped by their imaginative appeal, he became so blind to the actual reality of the content of these ideas that he often ended up affirming these ideas far more intensely than his philosophical position actually allows.

And it is clear that Nietzsche's writings in this context display a certain naivety: or, even more generally, in the context of 'human suffering' in general. For, as we will see, one of the notable personal characteristics of Nietzsche, which we can constantly detect in his texts, is his own desire for 'power' and 'health', his strong tendency to be fascinated by and fantasise about 'power' and 'health': which is particularly clear from his admiration for those extremely powerful, active individuals such as Napoleon and Caesar. And partly because of this, the problem with Nietzsche is that, when gripped by nostalgia, he sees such things as 'slavery', 'the order of castes' and 'war' only from the perspective of 'the masters', of the conqueror, hardly ever from the perspective of the oppressed, of the victims, and thus what he sees is only their thrilling or heroic aspects, hardly ever their awful sides: which is exactly why, in his 'cinematic'

imaginations of them, he can be enthralled by their imaginative appeal. In this sense, his view of them was extremely unbalanced.

Moreover, as I suggested before, Nietzsche's writings in this context also show a certain irresponsibility. For the fact is that even though there indeed exist many complications surrounding his affirmative remarks on 'war', 'slavery' and 'cultivation' as I have illustrated, because of the way – and the tone with which – he makes these remarks, he does appear to be very strongly arguing for and endorsing the necessity of 'war', 'slavery' and 'cultivation' in socio-political and biological sense. And clearly, these affirmative remarks of his can potentially have harmful effects on readers who do not see all the complications. In her discussion of the way Nietzsche in EH uses an exaggerated boastfulness to eulogise himself, Margot Norris observes,

He knows that his tone will repel his readers and abort any possibility of aggrandizing his philosophical reputation. But oblivious to the response of the "other," he discharges his high animal spirits in the very flamboyance of his expression, in the exuberant childishness of the diction. Nietzsche calculates no return on his discourse.²⁵

I think this observation is equally applicable to Nietzsche's affirmative remarks on 'slavery', 'war' and 'cultivation'. For it is clear that, when he is deeply absorbed by his 'cinematic' imagination of these ideas and becomes embroiled in an excited affirmation of them, he completely loses sight of his readers. In such state, he does not care about the impact his remarks have on someone else, and wrongly forgets the fact that these affirmative remarks of

²⁵ Norris (1985): p. 74

his could well lend themselves to affirmations of certain evils and result in sufferings, if they are taken literally and seriously by those who do not know what kind of philosopher he is.

And this also goes for Nietzsche's use of abusive language such as 'rabble' and 'ill-constituted'. As many commentators have traditionally suggested, his uses of abusive language, along with his hyperbolic remarks, are no doubt his 'style' of writing, his unique way of provoking us.²⁶ But then, it is also undeniable that Nietzsche's use of such abusive language is largely irresponsible, since there is hardly any attempt whatsoever on his part to make sure that such language would not be misunderstood by hermeneutically naive readers. And this, I think, is very much the result of who 'Nietzsche' is. That is, despite his brilliance, Nietzsche sometimes falls prey to the charms of explosive rhetoric, becoming intoxicated by his own words. And this too seems to be very much a part of his 'style' that we must recognise in reading and interpreting his texts.

So, in conclusion, I have argued in this chapter that while Nietzsche's thinking always was a mixture of communitarianism and individualistic thinking, it is individualistic thinking to which he ultimately attached far greater significance. Hence, in the end, while he continued to possess a concern for the flourishing of community generally, his highest value became the nurturing of 'higher types'.

However, I have also argued, Nietzsche is not a 'militaristic' aristocratic individualist who aims to achieve the nurturing of 'higher types' by militaristic means. For, while he may be

²⁶ See, e.g., Kaufmann (1974): p. 413

guilty of over-romanticising ‘war’, he was not a type of man who would or could embrace any sort of militarism in earnest.

Further, I have argued, Nietzsche is also not a ‘political’ aristocratic individualist who strives to achieve the nurturing of ‘higher types’ by establishing a particular kind of socio-political structure. For, Nietzsche’s remarks on ‘politics’ are generally uncritical, limited, partial and abstract in nature, and do not add up to what could be properly classified as a political philosophy that justifies certain political ideals.

My view is that Nietzsche is a philosopher whose concern lies with the general condition of every aspect of ‘life’, who takes interests in the condition of whole human affairs and holds strong opinions on almost everything: even on what one should eat and drink! Hence, what he provides in his works is not really a political account, but rather a socio-psychological or socio-cultural account of how the negative influence of Christianity has been spreading over various realms of human affairs, including ‘politics’. He makes comments in the context of ‘a species’ or ‘a people’, because he recognises how one is born as a member of a certain ethnic group, and how one’s way of life and outlook on life are necessarily shaped by it to some degree: “every people speaks its tongue of good and evil, which the neighbor does not understand. It has invented its own language of customs and rights” (Z: I, 11). Likewise, he talks about ‘politics’ chiefly because he recognises that we are all part of ‘politics’ in one way or the other and thus our well-being is inevitably affected by it to some degree. But, unlike properly political thinkers, he never really discusses political issues for the sake of politics. Rather, what he is really interested in is the ‘*individual*’ who creates a political system or enacts a political law, and not in its content: so, while he takes a keen interest in Napoleon as an ‘*individual*’, he is indifferent to what the Napoleonic Code actually offers us.

Hence, the ‘individualist’ reading I attribute to Nietzsche is ‘un-militaristic’ and moderately ‘political’. And crucially, it is also ‘religious’. In my view, Nietzsche’s highest goal was ultimately the nurturing of ‘higher types’, whose being and identity cannot be entirely separated from their ‘community’, ‘politics’, ‘history’, ‘morality’ and ‘religion’. And he strongly believed that the sickness of modernity, the on-going decadence of ‘life’ and ‘culture’, is chiefly caused by the dominance of the Christian conception of God, the Christian ‘monotheistic’ God who condemns certain intrinsic parts of life and imposes on people one universal ideal of life-denying nature. And my argument is that what Nietzsche truly regarded as the key to achieving his highest goal was what I call ‘the life-affirming type of gods’, a certain conception of gods symbolised by the Olympian gods of ancient Greece, who can help individuals to flourish by evoking in them a new ‘religious sensibility’. I will come back to this later in the thesis.

Chapter 2

Nietzsche's early religious thinking

In this chapter, I investigate the nature of Nietzsche's early religious thinking presented in BT. But firstly, in Section A, I discuss some significant interpretative issues concerning Nietzsche's historical narratives and genealogical accounts which we typically find in BT and GM. I argue that Nietzsche's historical narratives and genealogical accounts are essentially 'fictional' narratives, which are created by Nietzsche as means to illustrate and illuminate his ideas. And, in BT, through his 'imaginary' history of how the ancient Greeks responded to their suffering and overcame their pessimistic outlook on life with their 'art' qua 'religion', what Nietzsche offers is his idea and instruction on how and with what kind of 'religion' we too could possibly respond to our own suffering and overcome our own pessimistic outlook on life.

Then, through Section B and Section C, I examine the nature and effects of two types of 'life-affirming' religion which Nietzsche proposes in BT as the two possible solutions to make our life possible, bearable and worth living, namely 'the Apollinian type' and 'the Dionysian type'. As I discuss Nietzsche's key ideas in this regard, notably his idea of 'transfiguration' and his idea of 'an aesthetic justification', I point out several fundamental problems concerning his arguments for these types of religion. And through this, I argue that not only do these types of religion actually fail to function in the way Nietzsche suggests, but also the forms of redemption they provide cannot be deemed to be 'life-affirming' or 'proper' such forms.

Section A: The interpretive issue concerning Nietzsche's historical narratives

Now, some might object to my claim from the outset. They might argue that what Nietzsche presents in BT is not his early 'religious' thinking, but simply his 'aesthetic' thinking, since he himself claims that BT is a book which deals with "an aesthetic problem" (BT: *Preface*), intended to be a contribution towards "the science of aesthetics" (BT: 1). However, in my view, there are indeed good reasons why we can plausibly consider the ideas or outlook Nietzsche provides in this first published book of his to be fundamentally 'religious' in nature.

Firstly, while BT certainly appears to be, at first glance, a book about the ancient Greek 'art', especially about pre-Socratic Greek tragedy, Nietzsche makes it clear in the book that 'art' and 'religion' were placed in the same category among the ancient Greeks. For instance, he describes the origin of tragedy as "purely religious" (BT: 7), regards the key moment of its birth as "the most important moment in the history of Greek cult" (BT: 2), and calls the poet Sophocles "a religious thinker" (BT: 9): similarly, in his unpublished essay DW – written few years before the publication of BT –, he describes the worldview that appears in the Homeric epic as "a religion of life, not one of duty or asceticism or spirituality" (DW: p. 124).

Secondly, though it is not my intention here to discuss what exactly 'religion' is or what precisely constitutes and defines the 'religious', Ninian Smart in his The World's Religions in a helpful discussion famously proposes "the seven dimensions of religion which help to characterize religions as they exist in the world", namely, "*The Practical and Ritual Dimension*", "*The Experiential and Emotional Dimension*", "*The Narrative or Mythic Dimension*", "*The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension*", "*The Ethical and Legal Dimension*", "*The Social and Institutional Dimension*", and "*The Material Dimension*".¹ And as we will see, some of these

¹ See Smart (1998): pp. 10-22

standard dimensions of religion are clearly recognisable in the Greek art as Nietzsche presents it in BT. For instance, it clearly possesses, at least in a broad sense, ‘*Practical and Ritual*’, ‘*Experiential and Emotional*’, ‘*Narrative or Mythic*’, and ‘*Ethical and Legal*’ dimensions, in the sense that it involves ‘acts of communal worship’ such as the attendance at tragedy, ‘a trance-like ecstatic state of intoxication’ that causes people to experience “a mystic feeling of oneness” (BT: 2), ‘myths’ as narratives about gods that are recited at the worship, and ‘a theodicy’ as an ethical admonition for people’s practical life that stems from the myths.

And finally, BT was written under the influence of Schopenhauer, of whom Nietzsche at the time was a great devotee. And, as Young summarises, according to Schopenhauer’s account of religion which he provides in his The World as Will and Representation – the book which had a profound effect on the youthful Nietzsche (see, e.g., UM: III, 2) –, “a religion is something with four central and interconnected features: it provides a ‘solution’ to the problem of death, a solution to the problem of pain, and exposition and sanctioning of the morality of the community of believers, and finally, it is pervaded by a sense of mystery”.² Now, by reason of my reading of the mature Nietzsche as a ‘religious’ aristocratic individualist, I will not be directing my attention to the ‘communal’ features of religion: throughout this thesis, my main interest will always be in finding out how, in Nietzsche’s view, religion – god[s] – affects ‘*individuals*’, how it can help individuals to flourish and thus contribute towards the nurturing of ‘higher types’. But, as I will illustrate, the ability to deal with man’s suffering condition, to provide a ‘solution’ to the problem of pain and death – which Schopenhauer considers to be the most essential function of any authentic religion –, is clearly strongly recognisable in the Greek

² Young (2006): p. 13

art as Nietzsche presents it in BT.³ Indeed, in BT he ascribes an enormous amount of significance and value to ‘art’. What he sees and values most in ‘art’ is its ability to support and sustain our ‘life’. By recognising a strong link between ‘art’ and ‘life’, he interprets ‘art’ as “the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life” (BT: *Preface*) that makes our own life “possible and worth living” (BT: 1): “the complement and consummation of existence, seducing one to a continuation of life” (BT: 3), as he also puts it. In the light of all these points, I think we could indeed plausibly suggest that what Nietzsche presents in BT is in many respects his early ‘religious’ thinking.

But, before I start investigating the nature of Nietzsche’s early religious thinking, I shall first make my view clear on one interpretative issue concerning BT: namely to what extent we can trust Nietzsche’s historical narratives. And this issue, I think, is ultimately connected to and thus best discussed with another significant interpretative issue that has provoked a long-standing discussion among commentators: namely whether we should accept Nietzsche’s so-called ‘genealogical accounts’ as factual historical narratives, and what are their actual purpose and value if they are not truthful. And my view on these issues is that Nietzsche’s historical narratives and genealogical accounts are not factual, but should be grasped as essentially ‘fictional’ narratives that are created by Nietzsche as means to illustrate and illuminate his ideas.

Let me start clarifying my view. BT is a book that examines the rise and fall of the ancient Greek ‘art’ qua ‘religion’ by dividing the history of ancient Greece into “four great periods of art” (BT: 4). But, as severe criticisms from the academic world on its first publication indicated, despite being the only book written by Nietzsche as a professional scholar of philology, it can hardly be classified as a properly philological work. For, not only does it indulge itself in a great

³ In regard to those ‘communal’ functions which Schopenhauer ascribes to any authentic religion, Young in his Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion has sufficiently examined and illustrated how Greek art as presented in BT actually fulfils them (see Young 2006: pp. 14-33).

deal of metaphysical discussion that exceeds the limits of philology, it also, as Tanner remarks, “meets no conceivable standards of rigour, let alone those that obtained in the study of the ancient Greeks”.⁴

As such, some of the historical narratives Nietzsche provides in BT appear to lack something to be properly ‘factual’ narratives. For instance, he claims that the ancient Greeks were “so sensitive . . . so singularly capable of *suffering*”. They possessed “the keenest susceptibility to suffering”, which led to their pessimistic outlook on life that interprets their existence as something terrible and meaningless. And as proof of it, he cites the existence of their “folk wisdom” called “the wisdom of Silenus”, which claims that “What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is – to die soon” (BT: 3). However, it is questionable whether he is right to infer the Greeks’ exceptional sensitivity to suffering merely from ‘the wisdom of Silenus’: for there seems to be no other historical proof of it – at least he does not mention any –, and such a folk wisdom alone is simply insufficient to endorse his claim. To cite another instance, according to him, the Greeks with their exceptional sensitivity to suffering were “in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will” (BT: 7). But, according to Silk and Stern, who have examined the credibility of BT from the classical perspective, there is actually “no evidence whatsoever that in their pessimistic travels the Greek were ever . . . close to a ‘Buddhistic negation of the will’”.⁵

Throughout his mature works, Nietzsche also provides various historical narratives as a part of his investigations and arguments. Most notably, in GM, he presents historical narratives concerning the origins of morality, his ‘genealogical accounts’ of morality. Now, there are

⁴ Tanner (2000): p. 7

⁵ Silk & Stern (1983): p. 161

passages of Nietzsche that prompt us to think that he intends his genealogical accounts to be ‘factual’ historical narratives. For instance, he claims in the preface of GM,

My desire, at any rate, was to point out to so sharp and disinterested an eye as his [Nietzsche’s friend Paul Rée, author of The Origins of the Moral Sensations, whom Nietzsche criticises for providing an implausible account of the origin of morality] a better direction in which to look, in the direction of an actual *history of morality*, and to warn him in time against gazing around haphazardly in the blue after the English fashion. For it must be obvious which color is a hundred times more vital for a genealogist of morals than blue: namely *gray*, that is, what is documented, what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short the entire long hieroglyphic record, so hard to decipher, of the moral past of mankind! (GM: *Preface*, 7).

However, despite such a claim, his genealogical accounts are, as ‘factual’ historical narratives, not at all satisfactory. For instance, although he repeatedly mentions characters such as ‘slaves’ and ‘masters’ in his genealogical accounts, he often refuses to tell us exactly of which specific historical period he is talking about. Moreover, just as in the historical narratives of BT, in his genealogical accounts he also fails to provide adequate historical evidence that is capable of endorsing his claims.

Such obscurity and unscholarly approach has led some commentators to question whether Nietzsche actually intends his genealogical accounts to be factual. So, on the one hand, Simon May suggests that “Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts, of which that of the masters and slaves is a paradigm, are best taken as fictional”. But, May also argues, “this does not prevent them from being valuable as ways of getting us to think, even if hypothetically, about the functions of our actual ethical practices and their motivations by relating them to possible earlier or more

elementary practices and motivations in a manner which is free of the search for timeless ‘groundings’”.⁶ On the other hand, Leiter argues that the absence of scholarly apparatus does not entail that Nietzsche’s GM is a useful fiction. Leiter suggests that while Nietzsche intends GM to present the facts about the multiple and complex origins of a certain type of morality, he eschewed a conventional scholarly format, because “the tone and trappings of a scholarly treatise would simply be an impediment” to his ultimate goal in the book, namely “to critique” a certain type of morality “in order to free nascent higher human beings from their false consciousness” about this certain type of morality, i.e. from their false belief that this certain type of morality is good for them. Leiter writes, “while the *Genealogy* purports to make *true* or *false* claims about the origins of . . . [a certain type of morality], it is manifestly not a conventional *scholarly* or *scientific* treatise, reflecting a “desire . . . for cold, pure, inconsequential knowledge” (U III: 6). Its aim is *not* to know the truth about . . . [the] origins [of this certain type of morality] for the sake of knowing that truth; rather, it is animated by the same profound normative commitment as all Nietzsche’s mature work: to *revalue* existing morality”.⁷

I think May and Leiter both have got a point. I agree with May that Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts could still offer a means to discover functions of and motivations behind our ethics in general that have been unrecognised by us, even if these accounts were in themselves ‘fictions’. But then, since Nietzsche explicitly claims that what he aims to uncover in GM is the existence of “plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth” (GM: I, 1), it seems that not

⁶ See May S (1999): p. 52. Bernard Williams also takes an approach similar to May’s, by interpreting Nietzsche’s genealogy as essentially “a fictional story which represents a new reason for action as being developed in a simplified situation as a function of motives, reactions, psychological processes which we have reason to acknowledge already” (see Williams B 2000: p. 159).

⁷ See Leiter (2002): pp. 176 & 180-181

everything about his genealogical accounts can be ‘fictional’. On the other hand, I agree with Leiter that one of the main tasks to which Nietzsche in his mature works devotes his energy is to undermine what he considers to be people’s fundamentally erroneous notions about a certain type of morality, specifically ‘slave morality’ typified by Christian morality, to urge people to question their unreserved adherence to its values, in order to promote the nurturing of ‘higher types’ who are capable of performing the ‘revaluation of all values’ (see, e.g., *GM: Preface*, 6). However, it seems to me that what Leiter overlooks here is the fact that Nietzsche can still achieve his goal of ‘criticising’ morality as well as making ‘*true* or *factual* claims’ about the origins of morality even in the form of ‘a fiction’.

As I mentioned before, Nietzsche is a thinker who often style himself as a ‘psychologist’. In *EH*, he claims that “a psychologist without equal speaks from my writings” (*EH: Books*, 5), that the three essays constituting *GM* are “Three decisive preliminary studies by a psychologist for a revaluation of all values”, and that what he offered in those essays are the “truth” concerning “the birth of Christianity: the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*”, “the psychology of the *conscience*” and “the first psychology of the priest” (see *EH: GM*): so, his concern in *GM* clearly lies with the ‘psychological’ origins of morality. And, interestingly, two individuals whom he often praises as great psychologists are Dostoyevsky and Stendhal (see *BGE*: 39, *TI*: IX, 45 & *EH: CW*, 3). Now, though these two novelists did draw inspiration from actual history as well as from their own personal experiences, their literary works are clearly in themselves ‘fictional’ narratives. Yet, it is also clear that even through their ‘fictional’ narratives these novelists do perfectly succeed in condemning certain moralities, certain political arrangements and certain social and moral evils. In fact, by using their gifted style, their ‘fictional’ narratives often manage to urge the readers both to reflect on themselves and revise their views, including their fixed ideas on morality, in a much more effective and convincing

manner than some wearisome academic books can ever do. Moreover, though expressed in the form of ‘fictional’ narratives, many of those novelists’ brilliant insights into subtle human psychology – such as envy, vanity, vengeance and greed – are surely in themselves ‘true’ or ‘factual’. Hence, technically, Nietzsche too can perfectly well criticise a certain type of morality and present the facts concerning the ‘psychological’ origins of morality in his genealogical accounts, even if these accounts are in themselves ‘fictions’.

How, then, should we interpret Nietzsche’s genealogical accounts? In my view, his genealogical accounts clearly contain some ‘fictional’ elements: they have a touch of fantasy, “a mythic quality”.⁸ For instance, ‘the masters’ whom Nietzsche in GM portrays as “triumphant monsters” capable of emerging from hideous acts – such as murder, rape and torture – cheerfully and innocently, are so excessively bestial and cruel, that it is hard to imagine that such beings have actually existed ever or have existed as widely as he suggests (see GM: I, 11). But then, at the beginning of GM he criticises a group of English psychologists for presenting an implausible psychological account (see GM: I, 1-2), and in EH he emphasizes that what he revealed in GM were indeed ‘truths’ (see EH: *GM*). In the light of this, it also seems clear that Nietzsche does intend to make ‘factual’ claims about the ‘psychological’ origins of morality in his genealogical accounts. Moreover, since he presumably did use actual history for creating his genealogical accounts,⁹ and since he investigates and discusses the origins of morality in a socio-anthropological framework, his genealogical accounts also clearly seem to contain some historical and sociological facts. Therefore, my view is that his genealogical accounts are hybrid mixtures of real history, real sociology, real psychology and fiction.

⁸ Bergmann (1988): p. 29

⁹ See Leiter (2002): p. 181

Likewise, I suggest that the historical narratives Nietzsche provides in BT should also be interpreted as such hybrid mixtures: mixtures of real Greek history, real psychology and fiction. For, despite all those faults of theirs mentioned earlier, there is no doubt that his historical narratives in BT do contain some accurate historical facts about ancient Greece. Yet, it is also clear that Nietzsche never intended his historical narratives in BT to be completely ‘factual’. For, after all, he was a young genius who was promoted to a professor of Classical Philology at the age of twenty-four, three years before the first publication of BT: surely, he must have had both the knowledge of ancient Greece and the scholarly ability that are sufficient to produce a rigorously ‘factual’ historical narrative. But, as we have just seen, technically, he can still make ‘factual’ claims about human psychology in his historical narratives, even if these narratives contain some elements of ‘fiction’. And that clearly seems to be what he aimed to do in BT, as he remarks later in his life, while reflecting on BT, that the origin of Greek tragedy is “a difficult psychological question” (BT: ASC, 4), and that what he offered in BT was “a psychological analysis” of “the Dionysian phenomenon” as “one root of the whole Greek art” (EH: BT, 1).

Why, then, did Nietzsche feel the need to introduce the ‘fictional’ elements into his historical narratives? Clearly, it is not as if he could not have presented psychological facts about the origin of Greek tragedy in the form of strictly ‘factual’ historical narratives. This leads me to suggest that what he aimed to present through his essentially ‘fictional’ historical narratives in BT was not just some specific psychological facts concerning the origin of Greek tragedy, such as why, how and under what kind of psychological conditions the Greeks created tragedy, but also some ‘*universal*’ and ‘*timeless*’ facts about human psychology, his own insights into certain ‘*universal*’ and ‘*timeless*’ psychological phenomena, such as how one’s

psychology would react once one realised the terrible nature and meaninglessness of one's existence as symbolised by 'the wisdom of Silenus'.

But then, if that is indeed the case, why did Nietzsche choose to express such insights of his in the historical context, specifically in the context of the history of ancient Greece, and not in other contexts? My suggestion here is that it is probably for the same reason that many novelists have traditionally found 'history' suitable material to develop their fictional narratives to express and convey their views and ideas to people.

Many novels are written against some historical backgrounds, written around and dealing with some historical events, say, the French revolution: Les Misérables by Victor Hugo, The Gods Will Have Blood by Anatole France, A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens, to name but a few. Now, it is certainly possible for us to try to construct a coherent historical narrative out of these novels, try to check how accurate their storylines are to the actual historical event of the French revolution. Many scholars have certainly done this, so today we can find a plenty of such information in footnotes of the paperback edition of these novels. But then, most of us would surely agree that the historical accuracy of these novels is not really the point, and that the point is rather the psychological views or worldviews expressed in those novels.

For instance, when we read Dickens' novel Little Dorrit, not many of us would seriously ask whether there really existed the Marshalsea debtor's prison and the Circumlocution Office. To be sure, for writing the novel, Dickens no doubt used actual history to some degree. And many of the places that appear in the novel actually existed or still exist. And the novel also strongly reflects the socio-political situation of Dickens' time. But then, Dickens clearly never intended the novel to be a 'factual' historical narrative. What Dickens portrays in the novel is not the actual history of London, not the actual 'reality' of Victorian London, but rather an 'imaginary' history of London, an 'idea' of Victorian London. Rather than treating the actual history or

reality of London as it is, he used it both as a source of his inspiration and as a material to develop the novel as a fictional narrative, partly because he was familiar with it, partly because he presumably found ‘history’ to be something people can easily relate to – as many other novelists have done –, but also chiefly because what he intended to convey to people were much more than some facts about Victorian London.

That is, at one level, Little Dorrit is in some way a socio-political satire, expressing Dickens’ views on certain socio-political issues that are peculiar to Victorian London, such as the absurdity of debtor’s prison and the then government’s incompetence. But, at another level, just as Dostoyevsky and Stendhal – whom Nietzsche admires as psychologists – do in their novels, what Dickens also presents in this novel are his insights into certain ‘*universal*’ and ‘*timeless*’ psychological phenomena, such as greed, vanity, guilt, self-deception, hypocrisy, the psychological effects of confinement, and so on, which are gained from his acute power of observation as well as from his own personal experiences: Dostoevsky’s admiration for Dickens was undoubtedly largely based on this aspect. At the same time, most importantly, just as many great novelists and poets do through their literary works, what Dickens also offers in this novel is a new worldview. By using the actual history of London as a material, by using clever plots, by working the strikingly original characters in ingenious ways, he creates an imaginary history of London in which his outlook such as on human existence, on morality and on suffering, as well as his ideas such as those of human liberation and of human redemption, are tactfully articulated and endorsed. And with this imaginary history, what Dickens truly wanted to do was not merely to entertain people, but to move people, to urge people to see themselves and the world from a different perspective in a certain new light, to change people’s sensitivity and attitude towards ‘life’. And for Nietzsche, I suggest, the history of ancient Greece was suitable material in the same kind of way to develop his fictional narratives to express his ideas, not only

because he was well acquainted with it, but also more crucially because the ancient Greeks always symbolised to him what he perceived to be the ideal ‘life-affirming’ life.

That is, in my view, Nietzsche’s true aim in BT was not just to offer his insights into certain ‘universal’ and ‘timeless’ psychological phenomena, but also to present his ideas of how we could respond to our own realisation of the terrible nature and meaninglessness of our existence. Indeed, he claims in HAH, “When we speak of the Greeks we involuntarily speak of today and yesterday: their familiar history is a polished mirror that always radiates something that is not in the mirror itself” (HAH: II, i, 218). And he also claims in EH, “what was really valuable in the essay [BT] was ignored. “Hellenism and Pessimism” would have been a less ambiguous title – suggesting the first instruction about how the Greeks got over their pessimism, how they *overcame* it” (EH: *BT*, 1). In the light of these claims, it could be plausibly suggested that Nietzsche intends his imaginary history of ancient Greece in BT – as well as in his other works – to function as ‘a polished mirror’ in which to look at ourselves, to assess the condition of our own ‘life’. At the same time, when he discusses how the ancient Greeks responded to their suffering and overcame their pessimism with their ‘art’ as ‘religion’, he is also instructing us concerning with what kind of ‘religion’ we could possibly respond to our own suffering and overcome our own pessimistic outlook on life.¹⁰

This instructive aspect of Nietzsche’s fictional narratives is particularly apparent in his creation of ‘archetypes’. As Silk and Stern suggest, Nietzsche in BT possesses a fundamental desire for “an archetype: a single, symbolic figure who sums up the whole drift of a movement, a whole constellation of forms or ideas; a figure capable of symbolizing its origin and its essence alike”.¹¹ So, for instance, even by going against historical facts sometimes, Nietzsche

¹⁰ See Young (2006): p. 15

¹¹ Silk & Stern (1983): p. 151

in BT intentionally transforms Homer into the archetype of Greek epic, Archilochus into the archetype of Greek lyric, Socrates into the archetype of rationalism and Wagner's music into the archetype of the Dionysian music: in fact, such an inclination of his to transform individuals or objects into symbolic figures or models is also strongly present throughout most of his works, as I will suggest in the following chapters. Why the 'archetypes'? He claims in EH, "A psychologist might still add that what I heard as a young man listening to Wagnerian music really had nothing to do with Wagner; that when I described Dionysian music I described what *I* had heard – that instinctively I had to transpose and transfigure everything into the new spirit that I carried in me" (EH: *BT*, 4). Such claim suggests that he considers the creation of archetypes an appropriate 'instructive' means to illustrate and express his ideas, or to illuminate those of his and others' inner states which he takes to reveal typical psychological patterns in human beings. So, for instance, despite the historical fact that ancient Greece was "a multifarious collection of small states, each with its own propensities and peculiarities",¹² Nietzsche throughout his life treats the ancient Greeks as a single people with a single culture. And by idealising the Greeks, he transforms them into the archetype of – what he perceives to be – the ideal 'life-affirming' life. And by setting this archetype over against what he considers to be the 'life-denying' decadent life symbolised by Christianity, he attempts to illustrate and illuminate his idea of 'life-affirmation' and his criticism of Christianity.

And in my view, Nietzsche's genealogical accounts should also be grasped as fictional narratives of such nature. That is, I think Leiter is wrong to assert that Nietzsche's aim in GM is simply "critical not positive".¹³ Certainly, as I suggested, one of Nietzsche's aims in GM is to criticise a certain type of morality, to undermine people's fundamental erroneous notions about

¹² Silk & Stern (1983): p. 186

¹³ See Leiter (2002): p. 167

a certain type of morality. And another aim is to reveal and present the facts concerning the ‘psychological’ origins of morality. However, his genealogical accounts also seem to me to possess one other, much more positive aim. For, I agree with Tanner when he suggests that GM is “Nietzsche’s most sustained and profound attempt to make sense of suffering, and of how other people have tried to make sense of it”, and that its “astounding twists and turns . . . , occasionally issuing in downright contradiction, are the result of Nietzsche’s constant broodings on the variety of methods which people have developed for coping with it”.¹⁴ So, by examining how people have created and accepted moralities to try to obtain and maximise their feeling of power over suffering (see Chapter 1-C), what Nietzsche also presents in his genealogical accounts is his idea of how we could possibly respond to our own suffering, how we could justify and affirm our existence in the face of suffering.

An interesting reading of GM is provided by Danto in this regard. Danto suggests that GM is “a medical book” written especially for “those who suffer from the diseases it addresses”. More concretely, it is a “*therapeutic*” type of book whose “intended reader is sick, if typically in ways unrecognized by him: one learns the nature of one’s illness as one reads the book”. And while showing the reader qua sufferer that “he is sick”, the book also allows the reader to be “treated as he reads, and a condition of therapeutic success is that he be kept continuously conscious of the disorder the book means to drive out”. And this disorder which Nietzsche qua therapist addresses and tries to help the readers cure themselves of are “interpretations of suffering which themselves generate suffering”: what Danto terms “intensional suffering” generated by “certain interpretative responses to the fact of extensional suffering”, which could be far worse than the extensional suffering itself.¹⁵

¹⁴ Tanner (2000): pp. 81-82

¹⁵ See Danto (1994): pp. 40-43

I think Danto is right. As a young man, Nietzsche was a great devotee of Schopenhauer and thus accepted the plausibility of Schopenhauer's pessimism that regards life as fundamentally meaningless and not worth living. And though he in his mature years separates himself from Schopenhauer's pessimism, he nevertheless continues to believe that life will forever possess in its nature the terrible aspects characterised by unavoidable pain and suffering, and that there is nothing one can do to stop the suffering caused by such nature, i.e. 'extensional suffering'. So, what he is concerned with is the way people interpret the existence of suffering, i.e. the cause of 'intensional suffering'. And in GM, his intended audience are those who interpret the existence of suffering in what he considers to be a wrong and unhealthy way, those who specifically get sick by employing Christian moralised conceptions such as of 'guilt', 'bad conscience' and 'punishment'.¹⁶

However, I think Danto gets it wrong when he claims that the 'interpretations of suffering' which Nietzsche addresses and tries to help the readers cure themselves of are

due, one and all, to bad philosophy, bad psychology, to religion – which in Nietzsche's scheme does not have a *good* form so as to make "bad religion" nonredundant – and of course bad moral systems, such as the one which takes as its primary value-opposition the distinction between good and evil. All of these are in a way modalities of . . . "bad consciousness" . . . Any suffering due to false moral beliefs about ourselves is due to bad consciousness, when there is nothing bad about us *except* our consciousness of being bad.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Conway (1994): p. 320

¹⁷ Danto (1994): p. 43

The ‘bad conscience’, or more specifically, the ‘bad conscience’ in its *moral* form, which can often make our experience of suffering far worse, is no doubt rooted in bad forms of philosophy, psychology and morality. But what Danto overlooks is the fact that Nietzsche recognises how the *moral* ‘bad conscience’ originates *only* from the ‘bad’ form of religion typified by Christianity, and how there actually exists a ‘good’ form of religion which does not yield *moral* ‘bad conscience’. For instance, in GM, Nietzsche claims that there are “*nobler* uses for the invention of gods” than that of the Christian God, invented and used as a means to create and implant into people the Christian moralised conceptions of ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and ‘punishment’: all of which generate and promote in men a strong feeling of self-condemnation and a deep-seated will to self-torture. And he affirmatively talks about how the ancient Greeks created and used their gods “precisely so as to ward off” the *moral* ‘bad conscience’, and how their gods also “took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt” (see GM: II, 23).

Now, the significance of those remarks will be discussed in Chapter 5. But, here, I suggest that what those remarks also demonstrate is that Nietzsche in GM is indeed not only aiming to criticise a certain type of morality and a certain related conception of God. By revealing how the acceptance of Christian morality and the related Christian conception of God make one psychologically unhealthy as well as life-denying – prevent one from flourishing –; by showing how those Christian moralised conceptions as a ‘wrong’ interpretation of the existence of suffering generate in one additional suffering; and further by telling us how the ancient Greeks qua ‘masters’ remained psychologically healthy and life-affirming through their morality and their gods, Nietzsche as ‘therapist’ is also urging us to assess the condition of our own morality and religion. And at the same time, Nietzsche as ‘educator’ is also implicitly instructing us

concerning with what type of morality and conception of gods we too could possibly become psychologically healthy and life-affirming.

Furthermore, in my view, what Danto also overlooks is the fact that Nietzsche in GM was not addressing things merely from the standpoint of ‘a therapist’, but also from the standpoint of ‘a sufferer’. As I argued in Chapter 1-C, one notable factor that sets Nietzsche apart from other Western philosophers is the ‘personal’ nature of his writings. In the light of this, if we indeed are to take seriously his claim in BGE that “every great philosophy” is “the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (BGE: 6), we could also plausibly interpret GM as a ‘self-therapeutic’ book written especially for Nietzsche himself as ‘sufferer’, in which he is confessing that he himself suffers from the Christian moralised conceptions of ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and ‘punishment’, and hence is trying to cure himself of his susceptibility to those conceptions as he writes the book: it is his personal attempt to find a way positively to interpret, justify and accept the fact of the existence of suffering, a way that would be healthier and more life-affirming than the traditional Christian way.

Likewise, in my view, we could also plausibly interpret BT as such a ‘self-therapeutic’ book written especially for Nietzsche himself as ‘sufferer’. I agree with Staten when he suggests that “Nietzsche is speaking of himself in *The Birth of Tragedy* when he describes the “profound Hellene, uniquely susceptible to the tenderest and deepest suffering,” who “having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature” is “in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will”¹⁸. So, as Nietzsche himself confirms later in his life, what underlies BT is a “deeply personal” question (BT: ASC, 1). In essence, the book represents his first personal attempt to cope with his sense of being assailed by suffering, his, and others’, to go beyond his own adherence to Schopenhauer’s

¹⁸ Staten (1990): p. 85, quoting BT: 7

pessimism, to rescue himself out of his own longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. And what the ancient Greeks in the book symbolise is the very type of life, the very type of attitude towards life, that Nietzsche himself personally craves to acquire.

Hence, the central theme of BT can be summarised as ‘how one is able to give a meaning and significance to one’s human existence and the world – and its history –, once one truly grasps the horrible truth that they are fundamentally characterised by nothing but unavoidable pain, and suffering’. And what Nietzsche tries to achieve in the book is to identify the best possible way positively to interpret and understand all the pain and suffering he sees around him, to justify and redeem all those terrible and absurd aspects of human existence and the world, so that he, and we, can overcome the pessimistic outlook on life. And as he finds the key to this in the realm of ‘art’ qua ‘religion’, he proposes two types of life-affirming religion as the possible solutions to make our life possible, bearable and worth living, namely the ‘Apollinian type’ of religion and the ‘Dionysian type’ of religion.

Section B: The Apollinian type of religion

Concerning the birth of the Apollinian type of religion in ancient Greece, Nietzsche in BT tells us how the Greeks were originally living under the “order of terror”. By being totally powerless against suffering, they interpreted their existence as utter pain. Their pessimism is symbolised by their mythic examples such as of “the wise Oedipus” who was compelled to suffer his “terrifying fate” for solving the riddle of the sphinx, as well as by the folk wisdom of Silenus which claims that “What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is – to die soon”. Since they grasped the stern realities of life to the utmost through their exceptional sensitivity to suffering, the Greeks were obliged to create the world of the Olympians from “a most profound need”, in order to be able to bear their own existence, to ‘overcome’ or at least ‘veil’ such realities from their sight. And it was only “under the bright sunshine of such gods” that their existence became the subject of an obdurate attachment: something so truly “desirable in itself” that even one’s “lamentation itself becomes a song of praise”. In this way, the Greeks came to feel themselves worthy of living (see BT: 3).

So, Nietzsche presents the Apollinian type of religion as what is established as a measure against “the terror and horror of existence” (BT: 3), as a way to overcome one’s pessimistic outlook on life. He claims that the relationship between the world of the Olympians and the wisdom of Silenus is that of “the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his suffering” (BT: 3). By this, he seems to mean that the world of the Olympians was created under a psychology similar to that of a Christian martyr who is forced to imagine the Kingdom of God in order to ease the pain and suffering caused by torture. And in the case of the Greeks, given their exceptional sensitivity to suffering, their realisation of the terrible nature of life was enough to

drive them to imagine the realm of bright serene gods, in order to ease the pain involved in that very realisation.

What, then, is the nature of the world of the Olympians? In Nietzsche's view, it is essentially an artwork as "a metaphysical supplement of the reality of nature" (BT: 24), which is supplied by art as "the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life" (BT: *Preface*), specifically by Apollinian art. Apollinian art represents the 'image-making' art forms that produce beautiful images with exceptional "clarity and firmness" (BT: 8). And the world of the Olympians was created when 'the Apollinian' as a natural artistic energy, which is by itself capable of producing such beautiful images, was mediated through Homer as the archetype of the Apollinian artist who typifies the outstanding artistic sensibility and creativity of the Greeks (see BT: 1-3). Compared to "the incompletely intelligible everyday world", the world of the Olympians is an image world of beautiful illusion, in which "all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous" (BT: 1).

More crucially, Nietzsche claims, the world of the Olympians is "a transfiguring mirror" that portrays the Olympian gods living "the life of men" themselves, who are the "ideal picture" of Greeks' own existence "surrounded with a higher glory" (see BT: 3). He writes,

Whoever approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, searching among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for disincarnate spirituality, for charity and benevolence, will soon be forced to turn his back on them, discouraged and disappointed. For there is nothing here that suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty. We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, whether good or evil, are deified (BT: 3).

This passage seemingly suggests that Nietzsche intends the world of the Olympians to be different from the Kingdom of God in nature: although he does not name Christianity as a target of his criticism in BT – this was made clear only when the second preface was added to the book –, he is seemingly trying to make a contrast between Christianity and the Apollinian type of religion. That is, what he is implying here seems to be that whereas the Kingdom of God is an imaginary world founded on a completely ‘non-human’ ideal that depicts only a perfectly ‘good’ and pleasant afterlife, the world of the Olympians as ‘a transfiguring mirror’ is an imaginary world founded on a ‘human’ ideal, an idealisation of the actual world that depicts a “fantastic excess” of ‘human’ life (see BT: 3). It is an extraordinarily beautiful and magnificent spectacle of ‘the life of men’ which the gods themselves lead in an enviably brilliant fashion. So, compared with the Kingdom of God, what it depicts are not only ‘good’ and pleasant images, but also ‘evil’ and unpleasant images: the Homeric epic, the Iliad in particular, is indeed a story of war that contains many gruesome scenes.

How exactly, then, does the world of the Olympians help people to overcome their pessimistic outlook on life? Nietzsche’s idea of the effect of the world of the Olympians can be summed up by the term ‘transfiguration’. As we have just seen, the ‘transfiguration’ is a kind of ‘idealisation’ within the limits of human ideal. However, as to how such idealisation transforms one’s existence into the subject of an obdurate attachment, Nietzsche is not specific in his explanation. But there are few passages that can help us figure it out.

Nietzsche claims, “So extraordinary is the power of the epic-Apollinian that before our eyes it transforms the most terrible things by the joy in mere appearance and in redemption through mere appearance” (BT: 12). And he also claims that “the redemption in illusion” can be truly attained only through the Apollinian as “the transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis*” (BT: 16). So, in his view, ‘the Apollinian’ is not only a natural artistic energy,

but also the *principium individuationis* that represents an illusion as an appearance to people's subjectivity. And the 'redemption in illusion' is a 'pain-free' contemplation of a beautiful appearance: the "consummate immersion in the beauty of mere appearance", which he also terms "naïve" (BT: 3). When the Apollinian qua the *principium individuationis* represented the world of the Olympians as an individual appearance to the Greeks, the extraordinary beauty of this appearance 'veiled' the stern realities of life from their view, so that the Greeks were able to gaze into this 'appearance' through "a radiant floating in purest bliss, a serene contemplation beaming from wide-open eyes" (see BT: 3-4). In this way, the Greeks were able to deal with their realisation of the terrible nature of life and managed to overcome their pessimistic outlook on life. Hence, Nietzsche also describes 'naïve' as the "oneness of man with nature", the reconciliation between the problematic essence of nature and one's realisation of it, which can only be achieved by "the highest effect" of the Apollinian (see BT: 3).

At first glance, it is not clear how the world of the Olympians, which is basically a mythical world described in the Homeric epic, could manage to 'veil' the stern realities of life from the Greeks' view. For, despite being an Apollinian 'image-making' art form, compared with other Apollinian art forms such as painting and "sculpture" (BT: 1), the Homeric epic does not give people an instant access to visual images. However, Nietzsche elsewhere claims that the Greeks possessed incredible artistic abilities which make us moderns ashamed of ours. And he also claims that, given their incredible artistic abilities, the Greeks were presumably capable of having dreams with "a certain logic of line and contour, colors and groups, a certain pictorial sequence reminding us of their finest bas-reliefs" (see BT: 2). Moreover, Silk and Stern point out that in ancient Greece, "most Greek poetry was *performed*, rather than read privately, and a good deal of it was performed to music. More specifically, much poetry was sung . . . , or had once been sung . . . , and an important part of the rest was chanted or declaimed to the lyre, as

was the case with Homeric epic”.¹ And Nietzsche presumably knows this historical fact, as he speaks of the Apollinian artist as “the psalmodizing artist” who sings with “his phantom harp-sound” (BT: 4). So, what he has in mind seems to be that when the Homeric epic was recited publicly at a religious festival, every Greek attending the festival could actually visualise and grasp the world of the Olympians as an individual beautiful image concretely and vividly. But then, a problem is that, as Nietzsche makes clear above, our much inferior artistic abilities do not allow us to do so. On this matter, he does not provide us with any solution. Perhaps, we could speculate, the youthful Nietzsche who had so much passion for art was hoping that his contemporaries – and probably himself too – would come to acquire such incredible artistic abilities, particularly through the appreciation of the values of Wagner’s music-drama.

Be that as it may, another problem is that, even granting we came to possess such incredible artistic abilities, it is unclear how the contemplation of the world of the Olympians would actually be ‘pain-free’ as Nietzsche suggests. For, the fact is that, as we saw, being an idealisation of the actual world, the world of the Olympians contains many unpleasant and gruesome images which depict the terrible aspects of human life such as suffering and death: what the Greeks contemplated in this idealised actual world was “the whole divine comedy of life, including the inferno” (BT: 1). It is difficult to see how the nature of such images could make contemplation of them the ‘purest bliss’. However, Nietzsche argues that one of the peculiar characteristics of the artist, including the Greeks as Apollinian artists, is that “Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist will always cling with rapt gaze to what still remains covering even after such uncovering” (BT: 15). By this, Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that even when the Greeks were confronted by one of those unpleasant images, because the image itself was extraordinarily beautiful, and because the Greeks always did have

¹ Silk & Stern (1983): p. 137

“the sensation that it is *mere appearance*”, they still managed to focus all of their attention on obtaining pleasure from the beauty of its “figures” and “forms” (BT: 1).²

Yet, we get a feeling that something else is still required to make the contemplation of the world of the Olympians the ‘purest bliss’. Certainly, it is possible even for us to look squarely at an unpleasant image and appreciate its exceptional beauty, as long as we are aware that it is ‘*mere appearance*’. For instance, while we are contemplating ‘The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid’ by Goya, we can and do enjoy its exceptionally beautiful forms and colours. For, no matter how gruesome the image it portrays is, we know for sure that it is just a painting. But then, it is also clearly the case that through this contemplation, we also experience painful emotions, such as sympathy for the citizens of Madrid and rage against the soldiers of Napoleon’s army, irrespective of whether we actually know the historical background of the painting. Hence, it seems that unless we are somehow exempted from feeling those painful emotions, the contemplation cannot be regarded as the ‘purest bliss’.

This leads me to suggest that the ‘Apollinian’ beauty of the world of the Olympians is not only extraordinarily beautiful but also contains an extra element which has a decisive effect on people’s perception, so that they can be enthralled completely even by the beauty of unpleasant images without feeling any painful emotion. And this element is, in my view, what Nietzsche implies by the ‘lies’ that the Apollinian beauty triggers in people: “here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the *eternity of the phenomenon*: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature” (BT: 16). What, then, exactly is the nature of this ‘lies’? Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not make himself clear on this. But Young seems to me correct when he suggests it to be a kind of “censorship” of the “inner perspective”, which prohibits people from knowing “how it

² See Young (2006): p. 18

feels to be on the *inside* of loss, injury and mortality” and thus makes terrible things such as suffering and death “bloodless and painless” in their perspective. By driving people to treat all death in an equally “objective” way, it allows them to evade – in Heideggerian language – “the ‘mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*)’ of death” and ultimately gives them “an ‘inauthentic’ attitude to death”, in which their own death is transformed into “someone *else*’s problem” in their perspective.³ So, as long as such censorship tricks the Greeks’ inner perspective, the Greeks can obtain nothing but pleasure from every image of the world of the Olympians. In this way, the contemplation of the beauty of their transfigured existence becomes the ‘purest bliss’, pain-free. And Nietzsche believes that such contemplation was sufficient to convince the Greeks of “the eternal joy of existence” (BT: 17).

So far, I have outlined the nature and effects of the Apollinian type of religion Nietzsche presents in BT. In his view, the Apollinian type of religion is a type of religion that redeems people by urging them to seek ‘the eternal joy of existence’ in the enduring aesthetic appearance of the illuminated ‘human life’ which the gods themselves lead in an enviably brilliant fashion. Hence, compared to Schopenhauer, who regards the appearance created by the *principium individuationis* as a cause of most of our suffering, Nietzsche does not see anything intrinsically wrong with it, provided we realise that it is nothing more than ‘*mere appearance*’: there is nothing wrong with the Greeks creating a beautiful illusionary world of the Olympians alongside this world, as long as they retain the sensation of its character being ‘illusion’.

Now, Nietzsche recognises that there is one serious downside to the Apollinian type of religion. That is, by transforming one’s existence into the subject of an obdurate attachment, the Apollinian type also ends up leaving one’s own death exposed to “real pain” (see BT: 3). For, while its redemption actively makes death ‘someone *else*’s problem’ and thus ‘painless’ in one’s

³ Young (2006): p. 19

inner perspective, it completely fails to provide any real meaning or consolation for the inevitable arrival of one's *own* death.

To this downside, Nietzsche does not provide any solution. And in the light of the fact that his central aim in BT is to identify the best possible way positively to interpret and justify the terrible aspects of human existence, this failure to provide any real meaning to 'death' could well be one of the reasons why he placed in the book more significance on 'tragedy' as the Dionysian type of religion over the Apollinian type, as we will see.⁴ Nevertheless, it is still an undeniable fact that Nietzsche in BT valued the Apollinian type of religion as 'life-affirming', especially for the way it makes people crave their existence so intensely, and considered the Apollinian redemption to be effective enough to help people overcome their pessimistic outlook on life.

However, in my view, besides this downside, the Apollinian type of religion also possesses more fundamental problems. That is, there are several fatal flaws in Nietzsche's arguments for the Apollinian type generally.

Firstly, it is difficult to see how Nietzsche's idea of 'transfiguration' can actually transform our existence into something truly 'desirable in itself'. Here, let me illustrate the problem by using 'a film' as a modern example of Apollinian art. Suppose I interpret my postgraduate life as utter pain and find it not worth living. Now, suppose also, a film about the life of postgraduates is made by a very creative director, using the finest actors: it is an idealised spectacle of the 'actual' postgraduate life, which beautiful characters lead in a brilliant manner despite experiencing many hardships.⁵ And what is remarkable about this film is that every

⁴ See Young (2006): p. 19

⁵ I derive this idea from Young, who suggests "the Western" as "a modern instance of Apollonian art", because, he argues, "death and destruction are all about, but what one focuses on is the cool courage and the sheer 'style' of its heroes" (Young 2006: p. 19). While I think Young's suggestion is generally plausible, 'the Western', or any 'film'

image it depicts is fascinatingly beautiful, so that it provokes no painful emotion in the audiences. So, for me, the film works in the same way the world of the Olympians worked for the Greeks: as ‘a transfiguring mirror’ of my own life. When I go to a cinema and watch the film, what I obtain is the ‘purest bliss’. Despite the film projecting unpleasant images repeatedly, my mind is always focused on taking pleasure from the beauty and brilliance of the characters, which make postgraduate life appear extremely desirable. In this way, I come to perceive that despite numerous hardships, my postgraduate life is still worth living.

However, here, the problem is that once I leave the cinema, it is only a matter of time before I rediscover how terrible my postgraduate life still is in reality. For, the fact is that the film has done nothing to change the actual state of my postgraduate life itself: as Schacht puts it, “Through Apollinian art, the world of ordinary experience is not actually transformed and its harshness eliminated”, and what we obtain is “only an altered state of mind”.⁶ The film gives me a new positive outlook on my postgraduate life, and I may be able to sustain it outside the cinema temporarily while I am still basking in the afterglow of the film. But I cannot sustain it on a long-term basis, since my mind will be again distressed frequently by what is still the harsh reality of the actual postgraduate life full of hardships, to the point where I reconfirm that my postgraduate life is indeed utter pain and thus not worth living: this is more so for the Greeks whose battling life is much harder and more unpredictable. The only way I can continue sustaining it seems to be to keep going to a cinema, to keep freeing my mind from reality by

for that matter, is, of course, not a perfect example. For, just as in the case of the painting of Goya I discussed, the contemplation of a film is not always ‘pain-free’, as we are often made to feel painful emotions by a film, despite knowing that it is a film. Also, Young’s choice of ‘the Western’ seems problematic, since no matter how brilliantly the life of cowboys was portrayed, it could hardly be an idealisation of the actual life for most of us: whereas the Homeric epic such as the *Iliad* is a portrayal of a war-bound life, which the Greeks themselves were actually leading. It is on the basis of this point that I choose to use a film about ‘the postgraduate life’ for my example.

⁶ Schacht (2001): pp. 196-197

constantly watching the film. But such life cannot be described as a proper 'life' in any sense. So, clearly, the Apollinian redemption does not function in the way Nietzsche suggests. What his idea of 'transfiguration' provides is only a 'temporary' and impractical solution that is insufficient to transform our existence into the subject of an obdurate attachment in reality.

Another serious flaw in Nietzsche's arguments for the Apollinian type of religion becomes apparent when he praises the Apollinian redemption for being "the only satisfactory theodicy" (BT: 3). According to him, the characteristics of the Apollinian beauty embodied in the Olympian gods were later converted into an ethical admonition for the Greeks' practical life, which demands "the delimiting of the boundaries of the individual, *measure* in the Hellenic sense", as well as "self-knowledge" to maintain such '*measure*'. And on the basis of this ethical admonition, the Greeks came to obtain a new perspective which regards dispositions of both "overweening pride" and "excess" as the root of evils. So, from this perspective, they re-interpreted their past symbolised by their pessimistic mythic examples, and understood that Oedipus had to suffer his terrifying fate "because of his excessive wisdom" (see BT: 4).

However, it is difficult to see how such a justification of the existence of worldly evils could ever be 'the only satisfactory theodicy'. Certainly, the Greeks can give a reason to all those misfortunes and calamities they had suffered in the past from this new perspective generated from the ethical admonition of such. In this manner, they may indeed be able to feel the existence of past worldly evils being justified to them. But what about the existence of present and future evils which they inevitably face and will face? Maintaining the '*measure*' may help them to avoid experiencing some artificial misfortunes. But it is clearly not sufficient for them to avoid all misfortune, especially natural calamities, since the actual world is still as terrible in its essence as ever despite the 'transfiguration'. Now, it is possible that the Greeks might have believed and accepted that even all those natural calamities too are caused by their own fault of

not maintaining the '*measure*' properly. But then, even if that was the case, it is still difficult to see how such justification of evils could actually contribute towards transforming one's existence into 'the subject of an obdurate attachment', because, to most of us, the type of 'life' that can still be hard and horrible despite complying perfectly with the ethical admonition one has been given does not at all appear to be something truly 'desirable in itself'. And we moderns, who know far too well that most of natural calamities happen irrespective of whether we actually respect our limits, are hardly convinced or satisfied by such a theodicy.

Nietzsche seemingly wants to argue that compared with Christian redemption that provides a consolation in the idea of a perfectly 'good' and tranquil afterlife which is founded on a completely non-human ideal, the Apollinian redemption founded on a human ideal is distinctly more 'life-affirming' and thus a better solution to the everlasting problem which every human being faces concerning his existence. But, from what we have seen, it is difficult to see how what is essentially a 'temporary' psychological transformation that is incapable of either changing the condition of the actual world fundamentally or justifying the existence of worldly evils thoroughly could become a solution at all. In fact, even at a glance, Christian redemption seems to be a more effective and thus better solution. Just like the Apollinian redemption, Christian redemption too is essentially a psychological transformation incapable of changing the condition of the actual world. But it does seem to manage to make both the terrible nature of present life and the inevitable arrival of death meaningful and thus bearable, by giving people a transcendent purpose to life through the conception of the Kingdom of God. Though there are many ways to interpret what exactly the nature of this transcendent purpose is and how it functions, one could plausibly suggest, for instance, that Christian redemption manages to justify the existence of worldly evils by converting human suffering into some kind of ordeal God gives to His beloved children for the growth of their soul, so that they can be in the end

accepted into the Kingdom of God, where all the suffering they experience in this life will be compensated.

Now, Nietzsche later in his life explicitly criticises such a teleological ‘otherworldly’ justification of human existence that prescribes a transcendent purpose as ‘life-denying’. And though he himself does not make it clear in BT, we can presume that his positive valuation of the Apollinian redemption is partly grounded on the fact that, unlike Christian redemption, it does not resort to a transcendent purpose. But then, we can see how this very refusal to provide a transcendent purpose undoubtedly makes the Apollinian redemption less effective than Christian redemption. In fact, it could also be suggested that, in certain respects, the transcendent purpose Christian redemption prescribes actually makes Christian redemption itself more life-affirming than the Apollinian redemption. Christian redemption might be deemed to be life-denying on account of the fact that it treats this present life as a means to the end called the Kingdom of God, rather than as the ultimate end, as ‘the subject of an obdurate attachment’. However, unlike the Apollinian redemption, Christian redemption does at least make people aware that death is a real thing, not ‘someone *else*’s problem’. ‘Death’ is a part of, if not the most significant part of, our life. And whereas the Apollinian redemption drives people to turn their back from this most significant part, Christian redemption manages to allow the faithful to face up to it directly with a great hope.

Furthermore, it is also questionable whether Nietzsche is right to establish the comparison between the Kingdom of God and the world of the Olympians in the way he does. For, what he seemingly fails to notice is the fact that there is a clear difference between the suffering of a tortured martyr and that of the Greeks. That is, as far as the way Nietzsche presents the Greeks in BT is concerned, though the Greeks had exceptional sensitivity to suffering, they did not seem to possess any strong conviction which drives them to think and expect that they ought to

be exempt from suffering, and that their existence cannot and should not be utter pain. On the other hand, the martyr must go through his suffering while possessing strong faith in the omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence of God. Now, it is possible that this faith of his could actually allay his suffering and make it more bearable to him. But then, there seems to be equally a good chance that his faith itself can actually become an extra burden. As his faith is shaken by torture, he could experience an unwelcome doubt – “No worst, there is none. . . . Comforter, where, where is your comforting? Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?”, as Gerard Manley Hopkins poignantly expresses in one of his poems –,⁷ which would make the suffering more difficult to accept and more difficult to bear. Accordingly, the suffering the martyr experiences could well become harsher in nature, in contrast to that of the Greeks who simply had no choice but to accept the suffering as a fact of life.

And finally, we could also question whether the way Nietzsche interprets the Homeric epic is really a correct one. In BT, Nietzsche is basically suggesting that by listening to the recital of Homeric epic such as the Iliad, and by visualising and grasping it as a world of extraordinarily beautiful images, the Greeks were so moved and touched that they thought of their life as ‘fundamentally terrible and yet actually magnificent, brilliant and thus bearable’.⁸ Now, it seems that Nietzsche is at least right on something. For, even today, when we read the Iliad, despite the fact that we – because of our much inferior artistic abilities – cannot visualise it in the same manner as the Greeks did, we can still be impressed and touched by the way Homer portrays human life and suffering in his marvellous style. No matter how gruesome the story is in itself, we can nevertheless ultimately be struck with not horror but pure awe. Nonetheless,

⁷ Hopkins (1985): p. 61

⁸ See Young (2006): p. 18

this is only one possibility since, clearly, there are also different ways of interpreting the Iliad, which actually suggest that Nietzsche's positive interpretation is mistaken.

For instance, Weil in one of her essays presents an interpretation of the Iliad which is far less positive than Nietzsche's interpretation. Weil argues that the true subject of the Iliad is the uncontrollable "force" which reigns over every human being independently and unconditionally. It is what constantly modifies every human spirit, ultimately capable of transforming man into "a thing in the most literal sense" even while he is still alive. Everyone, whether he is the hero or the slave, the strong or the weak, is equally subject to this relentless violent power of 'force' and ultimately compelled to go through shameful experiences of humiliation, despair, grief, fear and defeat.⁹

So, according to Weil's interpretation, what the Iliad ceaselessly represents is not a magnificent spectacle of 'the life of men' which the gods themselves lead in an enviably brilliant fashion as Nietzsche suggests, but rather a bitter spectacle of how men are constantly humiliated, defeated and made into "a corpse" by the merciless violent 'force', which is offered to us without any intervention of "comforting fiction" or "consoling prospect of immortality": a plain expression of human suffering and misery.¹⁰ In contrast to Nietzsche's suggestion, Weil is suggesting that by reading the Iliad, we are only made to recognise that our human life is not 'terrible and yet magnificent and brilliant', but simply 'terrible' through and through: we come to see that there is basically no redemptive quality in it at all as the wisdom of Silenus claims. If this is indeed the case, then, surely, no 'transfiguration' effect can take place in the way Nietzsche suggests.

⁹ See Weil (2005): pp. 183ff

¹⁰ See Weil (2005): pp. 183-184

Section C: The Dionysian type of religion

Let us examine another type of life-affirming religion Nietzsche also presents in BT. According to him, the Dionysian type of religion originated from the “Dionysian festivals” whose existence can be demonstrated throughout the ancient world (see BT: 2). In ancient Greece, the Dionysian festival was the worship of Dionysus by “the satiric chorus” (BT: 7), a group of communal singers. And the core of worship was the “dithyramb” (BT: 2), which belongs to Dionysian art as “the nonimagistic . . . art of music” (BT: 1). But it must be noted that ‘music’ is not an exclusive art form of Dionysian art. For, Apollinian art, despite being the art of ‘image-making’, also possesses its own kind of music. The difference is that, whereas Apollinian music is a self-restrained type of music that is composed of “merely suggestive” tones characteristic of “the cithara”, Dionysian music is an uninhibited, rapturous type of music that involves “the entire symbolism of the body”, such as singing and dancing (see BT: 2). And crucially, what Dionysian music does is to generate a state of “*intoxication*” (BT: 1).

Whereas ‘the Apollinian’ stands for the *principium individuationis*, ‘the Dionysian’ as a natural artistic energy manifested in Dionysian music is what causes “the destruction of the *principium individuationis*” (BT: 2). So, in the Dionysian festival, what the chorus experienced was the loss of their subjectivity to the point of “complete self-forgetfulness” (BT: 1). And through this, they were then driven into what Nietzsche calls ‘the Dionysian state’, an intoxicated state where they are seized by “a mystic feeling of oneness” (BT: 2), which is accompanied by “the blissful ecstasy” (BT: 1) that annihilates “the ordinary bounds and limits of existence” and casts “all personal experiences of the past” into “oblivion” (BT: 7). As they were made to feel as if they had risen above their everyday reality and had overcome every boundary that separates themselves and other things, each of them felt himself “not only united,

reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him”, while joyfully feeling himself to be “on the way toward flying into the air, dancing” (BT: 1).

As we will see, fundamentally Nietzsche values this mystic feeling of oneness produced by dis-individuation. So, at a glance, there is no reason for him to reject the Dionysian festival. But he does. For, he claims, the Dionysian festival would also bring out in people the “horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty” that destroys “all family life and its venerable traditions”, as was indeed the case in the Dionysian festivals of the barbarians (see BT: 2). By this, he seems to be suggesting that the dis-individuation one experiences in the Dionysian festivals is ‘*unrestricted*’ in nature. The *principium individuationis* is the principle that creates boundaries and limits by giving us individuality. So, under the *unrestricted* dis-individuation where we completely overcome individuality and consider ourselves to be not bounded or limited in any way, there will be nothing to stop us from expressing our natural instincts of cruelty and aggression in their purest form.¹

Further, Nietzsche claims, such *unrestricted* dis-individuation could also result “in indifference to, indeed, in hostility to, the political instincts”, since the *principium individuationis* is also the principle that “forms states”. Here, the idea seems to be that a state is formed when individuation creates a group of individuals who distinguish themselves from ‘the others’, and that the state can be maintained only when these individuals continuously affirm their subjectivity as members of a particular state, which provides them with both “patriotic instincts” and a “manly desire to fight” to continue confronting ‘the others’ in order to protect their own state (see BT: 21).² So, under the *unrestricted* dis-individuation where the complete

¹ Looking at his unpublished essay HC, which was written in the same year BT was published, it seems clear that Nietzsche was already embracing a naturalistic view that regards our essence as natural aggressive instincts (see HC: pp. 174-175).

² See Strong (1996): p. 123 & Young (2006): p. 22

loss of subjectivity causes people to be totally seized by the mystic feeling of oneness, they would find the notion of a socio-political life disgustingly needless.

As I suggested before, in BT, Nietzsche's highest value is the flourishing of community. Hence, for him, those consequences of the *unrestricted* dis-individuation are problematic. Accordingly, he recognises a need for the degree of the dis-individuation to be *moderated*, to the extent where people can experience the mystic feeling of oneness *safely* without suffering those problematic consequences. And in his view, this need was fulfilled perfectly in pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as the Dionysian type of religion, thanks to the mediation of 'the Apollinian'.

Nietzsche argues that Greek tragedy was indeed developed from the Dionysian festival as the worship of Dionysus by the satiric chorus: "originally only chorus and nothing but chorus" (BT: 7). But this pinnacle of Greek art qua Greek religion is also the ultimate outcome of "the *Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality" that promotes "the continuous development of art". Here, the idea is that when those two natural artistic energies finally achieve a synthetic unification after ceaseless productive conflicts, they create something far greater than anything which could be created by either of them alone, namely tragedy as "an equally Dionysian and Apollinian form of art" (BT: 1).

Realistically, tragedy is "the dramatic dithyramb" (BT: 4), a theatrical "drama" based on a lyrical poem which is created as the result of Dionysian music being mediated by Apollinian symbolism, that is, the chorus being mediated by a "stage" and "masked" actors (see BT: 8). And at one level, it is this Apollinian symbolism that *moderates* the degree of the dis-individuation, by providing some 'individuality' in the shape of 'individual' characters played by the actors: the contemplation of individual characters cannot be realised without the effect of the individuation. But Nietzsche also insists that it is 'music' that should be regarded as

“the womb” (BT: 8) of tragedy, and that tragedy can never survive without “the spirit of music” (BT: 16): so, it is the power of Dionysian music that plays the leading part in tragedy, and thus we can emphasize tragedy as the ‘Dionysian’ type of religion, despite the Apollinian elements it contains. Indeed, according to him, in ancient Greece, with the establishment of tragedy, the chorus began performing before the public audience in theatres. In a theatre, the audience were physically separated from the chorus by their seats. But, owing to the unique construction of Greek theatres, they were able to identify themselves with the chorus. Hence, there was “no opposition between public and chorus”, and all the participants of tragedy were “merely a great sublime chorus” (BT: 8) who experienced the mystic feeling of oneness *safely* through the *moderated* dis-individuation: “this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature” (BT: 7).

Now, Nietzsche’s argument concerning the effects of tragedy as the Dionysian type of religion rests on three key premises. Firstly, in BT he advocates what he later comes to term “an artists’ metaphysics” (BT: ASC, 2), a metaphysical assumption that what truly exists beyond the world of individuality is “the primordial unity” as “the universal will”, which creates and plays with the world perpetually as “the sole author and spectator” in order to constantly redeem its essence filled with the eternal suffering and contradiction (see BT: 4-5 & 17). Secondly, he considers Dionysian ‘music’ to be “an immediate copy of the will itself”, i.e. of ‘the primordial unity’, which “complements *everything physical in the world* and every phenomenon by representing *what is metaphysical*” (BT: 16). And thirdly, he believes that there exists an eternal, universal truth about the real nature of the world, which can only be grasped *intuitively* (see BT: 17).

On these premises, Nietzsche argues that the participants of tragedy were also enabled by the power of Dionysian music to have brief access to this eternal truth about the real nature of the world.

We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will (BT: 17).

As the dis-individuation drives our consciousness into the most primal reality, we catch a glimpse of the existence of the primordial unity as the “world-artist” (BT: 1), which acts as an inexhaustible, imperishable world-shaping force behind our everyday world of individuality. And as we acquire its perspective momentarily, we realise how this world-artist eternally conducts itself like “a playing child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again” (BT: 24): it creates and destroys the world of individuality delightfully but also aimlessly. As the result, what we come to acquire *intuitively* is the clearest insight into the truth about “the eternal nature of things” (BT: 7), which Nietzsche terms ‘Dionysian wisdom’, namely “all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end” (BT: 17).

Now, Nietzsche claims that if we were to recognise Dionysian wisdom *directly*, it would be unbearable (see BT: 21). For, Dionysian wisdom is fundamentally an “insight into the horrible truth” about the ultimate nature of us as ‘individual’ beings, the clearest insight into the terrible nature of human existence that substantiates the validity of the wisdom of Silenus. Once we are released from ‘the Dionysian state’ – from the world-artist’s perspective – and everyday reality

re-enters our consciousness, the burden of the *direct* recognition of such insight will make us realise that we as ‘individual’ beings can “not change anything in the eternal nature of things” but only prepare ourselves for our unavoidable sorrowful end. And this realisation will prompt us to see in everyday reality “only the horror or absurdity of existence” and subsequently kill “any motive for action”. As the result, we will be necessarily driven into “an ascetic, will-negating mood”, in which we come to be “nauseated” by the whole notion of existing (see BT: 7).

But Nietzsche argues that such situation is prevented from happening in tragedy, thanks to the mediation of “the *Apollinian* power”, which provides “the veiling during the performance of the tragedy of the real Dionysian effect” (BT: 21). To avoid our motive for action being completely killed by the *direct* recognition of Dionysian wisdom, we need “illusions of the beauty of mere appearance that at every moment make life worth living at all and prompt the desire to live on in order to experience the next moment” by being confronted by “a veil of beauty” (BT: 25). And that is what we get in tragedy, when the Apollinian power of ‘transfiguration’ qua ‘image-making’ causes the image-less music to discharge itself in “an Apollinian world of images” (BT: 8), awakening in us the illusionary world of “the tragic myth” and “the tragic hero”, which protects us from “the immediate unity with Dionysian music” and thus from the *direct* recognition of Dionysian wisdom by interposing itself between us and Dionysian music (see BT: 21 & 24).

Nietzsche claims that because of our identification with the chorus, what we truly gaze on in tragedy is ‘the tragic myth’ discharged out of music. Being an Apollinian world of images, the tragic myth is fundamentally “a dream apparition and to that extent epic in nature” (BT: 8). It is a “visible” world of exceptionally beautiful images with the Apollinian ‘clarity and firmness’, which, to some degree, shares with the world of the Olympians “the complete pleasure in mere

appearance and in seeing” (BT: 24): so, just like the Olympian gods, the tragic hero is a transfigured reflection of ourselves, of our human existence. Yet, he insists that it ultimately does not produce the Apollinian ‘redemption in illusion’ achieved through serene, pain-free contemplation (see BT: 8 & 22).

For, firstly, since the tragic myth is awoken in us while we are surrendering our individuality, we “become completely absorbed in the activities and sufferings of the chief characters” and “feel breathless pity and fear” (BT: 12). That is, whereas we treat the Olympian gods with the sensation of their being ‘mere appearance’, the tragic heroes are “different projections” of ourselves, “the objectification” of us in ‘the Dionysian state’: so we feel and share with the tragic heroes their sufferings and painful emotions (see BT: 5 & 8). And secondly, the tragic myth is also in nature “*a symbolic dream image*” (BT: 5). Despite possessing the Apollinian beauty that strongly attracts our gaze, it also seems to “wish just as much to reveal something as to conceal something”. It makes us feel as if it is hiding deeper symbolic meanings behind it so that we want to pull it aside like a curtain to uncover them. Accordingly, although we take a pleasure from the contemplation of the beautiful tragic hero, we are ultimately urged to negate this pleasure and find “a still higher satisfaction” in “his annihilation” (see BT: 22 & 24).

Why do we find the higher satisfaction? This is because while we shudder at “the sufferings which will befall the hero”, what we obtain from his annihilation is a premonition of “a higher, much more overpowering joy” (BT: 22). Being discharged from music as ‘an immediate copy of the will itself’, the tragic myth and the tragic hero are “symbols of the most universal facts, of which only music can speak so directly” (BT: 21). It functions as “a vehicle of Dionysian wisdom” (BT: 10), in that the ‘intuitive’ and what is per se ‘fatal’ wisdom has been visualised and conceptualised by the Apollinian power into symbolic, beautiful and thus bearable images

(see BT: 5 & 16): “a symbolization of Dionysian wisdom through Apollinian artifices” (BT: 22), as Nietzsche puts it. So, in the tragic myth, the annihilation of the tragic hero is a symbolic, beautiful instance of the inevitability of the annihilation of individual beings, i.e. the unavoidable sorrowful end of human existence, by which we recognise Dionysian wisdom *indirectly* and thus *safely* to the utmost limit where we do not lose our motive for action.

And as we are protected from the unbearable burden of Dionysian wisdom, what is then revealed to us metaphorically through the annihilation of the tragic hero is the existence of ‘a higher, much more overpowering joy’ which the primordial unity eternally takes from its exuberant fertility.

We are pierced by the maddening sting of these pains just when we have become, as it were, one with the infinite primordial joy in existence, and when we anticipate, in Dionysian ecstasy, the indestructibility and eternity of this joy. In spite of fear and pity, we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are united (BT: 17).

As we contemplate the annihilation of the tragic hero, we recognise conceptually that no matter how tragic his annihilation may be, he is a mere appearance for the primordial unity as the primal ‘life’ existing forever behind the *principium individuationis*, and that his annihilation does not stop it from eternally taking the ‘higher joy’ through the playful construction and demolition of appearances (see BT: 5 & 16). And at the very moment of this recognition, as we are surrendering our individuality, we too are able momentarily to experience this eternal ‘higher joy’ existing behind individuality. Hence, in tragedy, despite being forced to recognise the terrible nature of human existence, we are left with “The metaphysical comfort . . . that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and

pleasurable”, which enables us to return to our everyday reality not with the nauseating despair but with an enhanced vitality (see BT: 7).

And from all these, Nietzsche argues, what the Dionysian type of religion gives us is a new outlook on human existence and the world, that “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (BT: 5). Now, as many commentators acknowledge, this formulation of his is ambiguous and open to various interpretations. But, what he means by it seems to me to be as follows. We come to understand that we are, just like the tragic hero, mere appearances the world-artist as the universal will creates. Our existence, along with all those sufferings and contradictions found in the world, constitute “part of an artistic game that the will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself” (BT: 24), and thus that what we grasp as ‘our’ world does not intrinsically exist “for our betterment or education” (BT: 5). So, ultimately, “we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art” (BT: 5): our existence and the world are only justified as ‘an artwork’ the world-artist creates, as an object of the ‘higher joy’ of the world-artist. And Nietzsche believes that such outlook is sufficient to make the whole notion of existing bearable and thus help us endure life more positively than ever before.

So far, I have outlined the nature and effects of the Dionysian type of religion Nietzsche presents in BT. In his view, as opposed to the Apollinian type that justifies our existence by positioning us as “an artist” who creates a world of pleasurable appearance, the Dionysian type justifies our existence by positioning us as “a work of art” created by the world-artist (see BT: 1). In contrast to the Apollinian type whose redemption is founded on the individuation, the Dionysian type regards the individuation as “the primal cause of evil” and transforms the overcoming of the individuation into the source of supreme joy (see BT: 10). Compared with the Apollinian type that transfigures our human life in the world of appearance, what the

Dionysian type transfigures is ‘Dionysian wisdom’, and consequently ‘the eternal life’ beyond the world of appearance (see BT: 24 & 25). Hence, whereas the Apollinian type convinces us to seek “the eternal joy of existence” in the enduring aesthetic appearance of the illuminated ‘human life’, the Dionysian type redeems people by seducing them to seek this delight “not in phenomena, but behind them” (BT: 17).

Now, while Nietzsche’s account of the Dionysian type of religion is more extensive and detailed than that of the Apollinian type, it nevertheless contains many obscurities. But the most problematic aspect of his account of the Dionysian type, which is most relevant to this thesis, seems to me to lie with his talk of the primordial unity, and his related idea of ‘an aesthetic justification of human existence and the world’.

In my view, the most natural approach to Nietzsche’s talk of the primordial unity and his related idea of an aesthetic justification is to interpret them *literally*, that is, to interpret them as something purely ‘*metaphysical*’. So, according to this interpretation, Nietzsche really believes that there exists a conscious metaphysical entity as the ‘world-artist’, and that the Dionysian type of religion lets us identify with this world-artist momentarily. So, Nietzsche’s idea of an aesthetic justification claims that our existence and the world are eternally justified only as a beautiful artwork this world-artist contemplates delightfully for itself. That is, through the momentary identification with the world-artist, we recognise intuitively that we must exist and suffer purely for the sake of the ‘higher joy’ of the world-artist which perpetually plays with our existence recklessly with no care for our concerns, and that there is nothing we can do about it. But, at the same time, we ourselves experience and realise how happy this world-artist is. Consequently, the Dionysian type convinces us that we must take delight in being an artwork created by the world-artist, ought to be proud of being an object of the world-artist’s ‘higher

joy': it seduces us to think of our existence filled with pain and death as something beautiful, wonderful and thus bearable.

So, on this line of interpretation, Nietzsche recognises two redemptive effects in the 'identification' with the world-artist. And he seemingly thinks that they are superior to those of the Apollinian 'transfiguration'. Firstly, as opposed to the Apollinian 'transfiguration' that is fundamentally all about deception – 'lies' – which 'veils' the terrible nature of human existence from our sight, Dionysian identification allows us to recognise the truth about the terrible nature of human existence while making it possible for us to bear it. And secondly, compared with the Apollinian 'transfiguration' in which 'death' is continued to be portrayed negatively owing to its failure to provide any real meaning or consolation for it, the Dionysian 'identification' enables us to respond to it more positively by causing us to regard it as a necessary source of the world-artist's 'higher joy'.

Now, in BT Nietzsche values the Dionysian type of religion over the Apollinian type: he practically presents the Dionysian type as the ideal 'life-affirming' type of religion. And it is understandable why. For, when he was writing BT, he was very much a Wagnerian, trying to promote the significance of his master's music-drama as "the rebirth of tragedy" (BT: 20). Moreover, though in his mature works he increasingly came to take sometimes equivocal but usually sceptical views of 'the truth', in BT he clearly valued the discovery of the intuitive 'truth' itself highly. Furthermore, as I argued, his aim in BT is to identify the best possible way positively to interpret and justify all those terrible aspects of human existence characterised by 'pain' and 'death'.

However, I think that Nietzsche's arguments for the Dionysian type of religion, especially his valuation of its being the ideal type of religion, are problematic. For, firstly, his notion of the world-artist which consciously plays with our existence in the manner of a cheerful innocent

child is so metaphysically extravagant, that it just seems implausible and unacceptable. Being a devotee of Schopenhauer at the time, he undoubtedly developed his artists' metaphysics on the basis of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. He clearly intended the world-artist to be what corresponds to Schopenhauer's 'Will'. Yet, the fact is that, while he relies heavily upon Schopenhauer throughout BT, this notion of the childlike world-artist hardly makes any sense even in the context of Schopenhauer's metaphysics: for Schopenhauer never regards 'the Will' as a 'conscious' entity. And the situation is not helped by the fact that he provides no argument as to how and why what is essentially 'the Will' could or should be conscious.

Now, we could avoid facing this problem, if we instead interpret Nietzsche's talk of the world-artist as something '*metaphorical*', and regard 'the Dionysian state' to be more like a '*psychological*' state rather than a purely 'metaphysical' state. So, on this interpretation, there exists no world-artist, and the Dionysian redemption does not let us identify with such a metaphysical entity. Instead, the most significant feature of the Dionysian redemption is 'a mystic feeling of oneness' we experience through the dis-individuation. As we saw, it is an overwhelming sense of unity in which each of us feels himself as 'one' with the others. By breaking "all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or "impudent convention" have fixed between man and man" (BT: 1), it transforms every one of us from "the willing individual that furthers his own egoistic ends" into "the subject" which is "released from his individual will" (BT 5). Consequently, what it creates is a scene of "universal harmony", whereby we as completely un-egoist beings universally identify with others' subjectivities and profoundly feel their joys and sufferings (see BT: 1). Hence, on this line of thought, what the Dionysian redemption generates in us seems to be a form of 'altruism', an 'altruistic empathy' with others' suffering, invoked by our completely un-egoistic state.

This, I think, is not an implausible interpretation. For, as I suggested, BT is in some respect a fictional narrative through which Nietzsche presents his insights into certain *psychological* phenomena. Moreover, as I also suggested, in BT he creates ‘archetypes’ as an ‘instructive’ means to illustrate and express his ideas. And as he confirms in the second preface of BT, his claim of the aesthetic justification is meant to express his hostile attitude towards ‘moral’ interpretations of the world, in particular, to establish an opposition between his ‘aesthetic’ justification and the Christian ‘moral’ interpretation (see BT: ASC, 5). And though he in his mature years came to abandon his youthful ‘artists’ metaphysics’, he still continued to maintain his hostile attitude against ‘moral’ interpretations of the world throughout his life. And in the second preface of BT, as well as reaffirming that the world-artist is “an entirely reckless and amoral artist-god”, he also remarks, “you can call this whole artists’ metaphysics arbitrary, idle, fantastic; what matters is that it betrays a spirit who will one day fight at any risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence” (BT: ASC, 5). In the light of these, we could reasonably suggest that the world-artist is essentially an ‘archetype’ Nietzsche creates to complement his hostile attitude towards the Christian ‘moral’ interpretation, and that what is important for him is not the existence of such a metaphysical entity, but the nature expressed in it, which opposes itself to that of the Christian ‘moral’ God.

Furthermore, it is also true that one can actually find one’s own existence to be justified ‘aesthetically’, i.e. by seeing one’s own life as ‘an artwork’ or ‘a part of an artwork’ and finding it to be bearable, even without relying upon the existence of the world-artist. For instance, it is possible for one to feel one’s own life to be a remarkably adventurous tale, not ‘despite’ but ‘because’ of all those pain and suffering it contains: they are not the ‘objection’ but the very ‘testimony’ to the remarkableness of one’s own life. And while such outlook is irreducibly ‘*first-personal*’, meaning that not everybody is suited to such kind of outlook and nobody can

expect us to adopt, or demand that we adopt, such kind of outlook, it seems to be in itself a life-affirming outlook capable of helping some of us to find our own existence to be justified to us without resorting to any transcendent conception or purpose.³

However, the fatal flaw in this ‘*metaphorical*’ and ‘*psychological*’ interpretation is that it is difficult to see how this ‘altruistic empathy’ with others can help us overcome our pessimistic worldview: in fact, it would seem to make our suffering only worse. For, however much I come to care for others’ well-being as I care for my own, it will not in any way change the fundamental nature of human existence that is largely characterised by suffering. As Young remarks in his Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Art, “if human life is in general a confrontation with horror and absurdity, then it remains so notwithstanding my solidarity with the numerous other individuals who find themselves in the same predicament”.⁴ Moreover, by identifying with others’ subjectivities, and by feeling their suffering as if it is my own, my understanding of the terribleness of human existence will be only likely to deepen. And this will only further substantiate the validity of the wisdom of Silenus and make human existence appear more unbearable than ever before. Rather than helping anyone to cope with the reality of his own or others’ suffering, the Dionysian redemption, according to this interpretation, actually causes him to suffer more from this.

So, we are back with the purely ‘*metaphysical*’ interpretation. However, another problem with this ‘*metaphysical*’ interpretation is that even if we accept Nietzsche’s *metaphysical* notion of the ‘world-artist’, it is still hard to see how adopting it could actually make our existence bearable. On this interpretation, Nietzsche gives us the impression that knowing the truth about the terrible nature of human existence even partially is more redemptive than not knowing at all.

³ I owe this insight to Christopher Hamilton’s unpublished working paper “The world as an aesthetic phenomenon: some Nietzschean reflections”, which he has kindly allowed me to read.

⁴ Young (1993): p. 53

That is, as the terrible nature of human existence is made partially intelligible to us, we come to know why we are suffering, and this intelligibility makes our existence more bearable. So, presumably under this impression, Keith M. May suggests that what Nietzsche meant by his idea of an aesthetic justification is that “existence is partially rescued from its cruelty and wantonness by our imaginative grasp of it. If we call existence ‘cruel’ we thereby help to make its pain endurable, for we have defined and qualified them”.⁵ In other words, May is suggesting that if we say ‘life is terrible’, life essentially becomes ‘controllable’ to us in a sense. However, I think May’s suggestion cannot be entirely correct. For, while it is certainly true that we often find the vagueness surrounding the ‘unintelligible’, i.e. the struggle to articulate an exact reason why something is bothering us or what exactly it is that is bothering us, difficult to deal with, and that making it ‘intelligible’ may indeed be better in certain contexts, there are also surely many situations in our life where just leaving something as ‘unintelligible’ can actually turn out to be making it easier to deal with. As Hamilton puts it, “there is . . . something misleading about what May says. This is because it overlooks the fact that applying a moral predicate or set of moral predicates to something can make it (seem?) worse than it would be were it merely unintelligible. Perplexed by someone’s treatment of me I gradually come to see it as barbaric or brutal, and this makes it harder to cope with than had I merely seen it as unintelligible”.⁶

Now, as I mentioned, Nietzsche confirms in his second preface of BT that his claim of the aesthetic justification is meant to express his hostile attitude towards ‘moral’ interpretations of the world, in particular, to establish an opposition between his ‘aesthetic’ justification and the Christian ‘moral’ interpretation (see BT: ASC, 5). But, it must be noted that in BT he regards every outlook that prescribes meaning to human existence as an aesthetic outlook: an

⁵ May K. M (1990): p. 12

⁶ I am again grateful to Christopher Hamilton for allowing me to read his earlier-mentioned unpublished working paper, from which the quote comes.

aesthetically constructed ‘illusion’ to conceal the terrible nature of the world, a ‘stimulant’ that drives a man to continue existing despite the terrible nature of human existence (see BT: 15 & 18). Moreover, at this early stage of his life, he does not reveal exactly what he means by ‘morality’ or which aspects of ‘morality’ he is hostile to. Nevertheless, as I mentioned in Chapter 1-C, Nietzsche was always acutely aware of the enormous amount of human suffering that makes up human history, and he always held a hostile attitude to ‘moral’ interpretations of the existence of those human sufferings, as he continuously believed that ‘life’ was something that can never be justified satisfactorily in traditional ‘moral’ terms. And in BT, he clearly considered his ‘aesthetic’ justification to be the best possible way to give a meaning and significance to human existence and the world, positively to interpret and justify the existence of all human suffering in the healthiest and most life-affirming way.

And on the line of interpretation we are following, Nietzsche’s aesthetic justification is basically claiming that the world is like a massive arena where humans fight each other, a sort of dreadful magnificent spectacle or “a perpetual entertainment” which the childlike world-artist constantly organises and watches from a ringside seat as “the sole author and spectator” (BT: 5). And for a brief moment, the Dionysian type of religion enables us to be this sole spectator himself. And as we delightfully watch from the ringside seat how humans continuously fight, agonise and die beautifully one after another, we the sole spectator think to ourselves that ‘all this pain and all those deaths humans suffer are clearly necessary for pleasing me constantly. These things are indeed justified as an indispensable part of my entertainment’.

So, the crucial fact is that in the Dionysian redemption, human existence is justified not to us humans, but only to the world-artist with whom we can sometimes identify momentarily. As Young claims, “There is no suggestion here at all that humans find or can find *their* life to be pleasurable or justified. To suggest otherwise would be to suggest that because a concentration

camp “justifies” itself to its sadistic (or perhaps merely playfully mad) commandant as a pleasurable “entertainment” (*BT* 6), so too must the inmates find it justified”.⁷ But, on Nietzsche’s view, what is important is for us momentarily to see our human suffering not from ‘within’ but from ‘the outside’, as if ‘pain’ and ‘death’ were not our own, something that did not belong to us intrinsically. And he seemingly believes that such experience is sufficient ultimately to lead us to regard all pain and death we suffer in ordinary reality to be bearable, as we come to think that they are justified at least to the world-artist.

However, here, the problem is that it is doubtful whether such an experience of tragedy can actually be transported into ordinary reality in the way Nietzsche seemingly suggests. For, as Gardner suggests,

There is . . . no ground for thinking that reasons for action can be extracted from the experience of tragedy. The perspective of tragedy is of course necessarily connected with the practical perspective – tragedy is the contemplation of a doing, the object of practical consciousness – but it does not apprehend its object in a practical mode. Like aesthetic consciousness in general, tragedy provides a point of view apart from theoretical and practical consciousness: we arrive at the perspective of tragedy by, as it were, adopting the practical perspective and then exporting its object, namely, life presented as a domain for practical reason, to a contemplative context. So though tragedy may allow us, as spectators, to ‘see’ beyond morality, it does not take us, as *agents*, beyond morality. This is part of the reason why we need to repeat the experience: the perspective opened up by tragedy is one that we, as beings with lives to lead, cannot occupy; tragic knowledge of what is valuable about life cannot be preserved intact within life itself.⁸

⁷ Young (1993): p. 52

⁸ Gardner (2006): p. 240

To put it simply, the new ‘non-moral aesthetic’ outlook on life which tragedy as the Dionysian type of religion provides certainly makes sense inside a theatre. But this does not mean that it also makes sense in our ordinary reality, and that we can actually apply it to our everyday world outside the theatre and act upon it. For, for instance, whereas ‘morality’ may not matter in tragedy, it clearly does matter in our ordinary reality: in the world outside the theatre, we simply cannot completely suspend and let go of ‘morality’ in the way we can inside the theatre while watching tragedy. Indeed, this whole experience of tragedy, including the new ‘non-moral aesthetic’ outlook on life obtained through the Dionysian ‘metaphysical comfort’, is what can only be produced under extraordinary conditions. So, it is very likely that in order to sustain this new outlook in the ordinary world, we must forever be seeking out the tragic theatre, which is an action that can hardly be described as ‘life-affirming’: just as in the case of the Apollinian redemption, this makes the Dionysian redemption less effective than Christian redemption.

Further, another problem is that even if the experience of tragedy can actually be transported into our ordinary reality and the new ‘non-moral aesthetic’ outlook on life can actually make sense outside the theatre, even if we can actually apply such outlook to our everyday world, sustain it and act upon it, the Dionysian redemption founded on such outlook just does not at all seem to be a proper and acceptable redemption. As I suggested before, BT can be – in a sense – read as a ‘self-therapeutic’ book written especially for Nietzsche himself, his first personal attempt to cope with his acute consciousness of human suffering. And clearly, he personally considers ‘non-moral aesthetics’ to be the ‘only’ adequate solution to those terrible aspects of human existence and the world: by claiming “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (BT: 5), he is refusing to engage himself and find a justification in ‘morality’. And presumably he is also urging that we will also adopt his idea of the aesthetic justification and make a move from ‘morality’ to ‘aesthetic’ with him. However,

the fact is that, even supposing that making such a move is actually possible as Nietzsche seemingly thinks, many of us are reluctant to make this move, to take up his aesthetic justification, because, not only does he – at least at this early stage of his life – provide no real argument as to why we should do so, but also there just seem to be good reasons for us not to do so.

To begin with, many of us feel that the way Nietzsche's aesthetic justification approaches human suffering, the way it portrays human suffering as 'entertaining' and 'pleasurable', is so unspeakably cruel that it is hard to see how it can ever be a proper justification. Certainly, one is free to see one's *own* suffering as 'entertaining to *someone*'. It may be a sort of outlook that some people in extreme situations can and must adopt. For instance, it is probable that some of gladiators of ancient Rome had to think to themselves, in order to bear their uniquely suffering existence, that 'my suffering is a part of spectacle. I fight, bleed and get killed to entertain the Roman emperor'. And while such a kind of outlook on one's suffering is irreducibly '*first-personal*', this way of taking someone *else's* perspective to see one's *own* suffering seems to be in itself admirable in some sense and might even make the individual stronger. However, Nietzsche's aesthetic justification is clearly not the same kind of outlook those gladiators probably had, for what he is proposing here is an outlook that applies not exclusively to one's *own* suffering but to human suffering in general.

It is true that a child often finds burning ants under a magnifying glass 'entertaining' and 'pleasurable', because, among many possible reasons, it is just 'a game' to him: the suffering of ants is nothing to him, because he is 'the sole author and spectator' of this game. However, no matter how happy he is, it is clearly nothing short of cruel. And, in the context of Nietzsche's aesthetic justification, it is we humans who are the ants. Certainly, one may be all right as long as one takes the viewpoint of the Roman emperor, watching a spectacle joyfully from a ringside

seat. But what about the feeling and suffering of those who have to suffer at the centre stage, as a part of the spectacle? For one thing, surely we cannot and should never see others' suffering as 'entertaining' or 'pleasurable' under any circumstance: such an approach to human suffering in general wrongly neglects the basic fact that there are indeed many people suffering right now. And for another, surely any proper 'redemption' should always, and before everything, make human suffering justified to those who themselves are suffering, not to the one who causes it.

In Chapter 1-C, I mentioned how his writings sometimes display a certain naivety in the context of 'human suffering' in general. I suggested that the problem with Nietzsche is that, he sometimes slips into seeing things such as 'slavery' and 'war' only from the perspective of 'the masters', of the conqueror, and not from the perspective of the oppressed, of the victims, and thus that what he sees is only their thrilling or heroic aspects, not their awful sides. And, here, such occasional proclivity to naivety is apparent. For the outlook on human suffering Nietzsche's aesthetic justification provides is, to the end, a view taken from 'a ringside seat'. It seems as if he mistakenly thinks that he himself will always be a spectator sitting on a ringside seat, delightfully watching a spectacle, when the fact is that he can never become the spectator without first being the one who has to suffer at the centre stage, as a part of the spectacle.⁹ Because of this, not only does he wrongly fail to detect cruelty in his aesthetic justification, but also in his aesthetic justification he seemingly sees human suffering as something much grander than it actually is. So, while he may indeed be aware of the enormity of human suffering in general, he is actually refusing to take it seriously, refusing to take into consideration seriously 'the real weight of human suffering'. While his aesthetic justification claims to be dealing with human suffering, it is *not* really dealing with human suffering, since it does not grasp the reality

⁹ See Tanner (2000): p. 35

of that with which it *claims* to be dealing: the solution to human suffering it claims to provide is not real but spurious, or rather it actually provides no solution.

Further, the crucial fact is that when Nietzsche was writing BT, he was in no sense seriously suffering: he was actually living one of the happiest periods of his life. It may be no coincidence that the impression we get is that his aesthetic justification fails to show adequate respect for those who are actually suffering right now, that it betrays a sense of someone who has not grasped what it is like *really* to suffer. Only later in his mature years, when he himself started experiencing through his illness what it is *really* like to suffer, did he discover and recognise in a devastating manner how most *actual* human sufferings are not at all as ‘grand’ or ‘sublime’ or ‘magnificent’ or ‘beautiful’ as he imagined in BT, but rather simply ‘horrible’, ‘nasty’, ‘painful’, ‘miserable’ and ‘ugly’.¹⁰

And finally, the fact is that, whatever Nietzsche says, it seems impossible to relinquish a sense of the importance of morality as something worth holding to over ‘aesthetics’. Some of us may agree with Nietzsche that ‘moral’ interpretations of the world are in some way inadequate and life-denying. And perhaps it is actually true, as Nietzsche postulates, that our essence consists of natural instincts of cruelty and aggression, and thus that, by nature, we are cruel creatures who take pleasure in others’ suffering as cheerfully and innocently. But then, when we are faced with appalling human sufferings caused by heinous atrocities, the last thing we want to do is to find them justified ‘aesthetically’ as something ‘entertaining’ or ‘pleasurable’, by giving them some ‘non-moral’ meanings. Indeed, whatever we think of old-style war, what the twentieth century has surely taught us is that we could never give any ‘aesthetic’ meaning to the horror of Auschwitz or Hiroshima. So, instead, while we may try to reconcile ourselves to these sufferings and atrocities in some way, what we also really want to do is explicitly to condemn,

¹⁰ See Tanner (2000): pp. 77-78

and continue condemning, these atrocities as ‘evils’, in order to make sure that similar kinds of atrocities never happen again. And to do so, we genuinely feel that we “truly need a morality”.¹¹

So, in conclusion, I have argued in this chapter that Nietzsche’s historical narratives and genealogical accounts are essentially ‘fictional’ narratives, through which Nietzsche aims to present not just his insights into certain ‘*universal*’ and ‘*timeless*’ psychological phenomena, but also his ideas on how we could justify and affirm our existence in the face of suffering. And in BT, through his essentially ‘imaginary’ history of ancient Greece, what Nietzsche presents are his ideas of two types of life-affirming religion, which can possibly make our life bearable and help us overcome our pessimistic outlook on life.

However, I have also argued that Nietzsche’s ideas of the Apollinian type of religion and the Dionysian type of religion are problematic. The chief problem with the Apollinian type is that not only does it fail to provide any real meaning to one’s ‘death’, but also its ‘transfiguration’ cannot actually transform one’s existence into something truly ‘desirable in itself’. On the other hand, the chief problem with the Dionysian type is that though the Dionysian redemption does provide a meaning to one’s death, the way it justifies human suffering in general ‘aesthetically’ as something ‘entertaining’ and ‘pleasurable’ is so unspeakably cruel, that it cannot be deemed to be a proper and acceptable redemption.

Now, it is not clear that to what extent Nietzsche later in his life actually came to recognise those problems. In any case, the fact is that much of his early religious thinking does not feature in his mature works. This is, of course, largely because of his abandonment of religious

¹¹ See Comte-Sponville (1997): pp. 26-28; also pp. 21-45

communitarianism and his subsequent acceptance of the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest value. But, as I will explore in the next chapter, there are also a few other key significant changes in his philosophy as a whole, which also caused his positive religious thinking to change its shape and nature in his mature works. However, this does not mean that his early religious thinking has no relevance at all to his mature positive religious thinking. For, as we will see, throughout his mature works he clearly continues to maintain and develop some of the key elements of his early religious thinking.

Chapter 3

‘Higher types’

In the next two chapters, I examine the conception that constitutes the very backbone of the mature Nietzsche’s thinking as a whole, namely ‘higher types’. And in the process, I also examine other key conceptions that have strong relevance to the nature of ‘higher types’, namely ‘nobility’ and ‘life-affirmation’. These examinations are important for this thesis, since my argument is that Nietzsche’s highest goal was ultimately the nurturing of ‘higher types’, and that what he truly regarded as the key to achieving this highest goal of his was what I call ‘the life-affirming type of gods’, a certain conception of gods symbolised by the Olympian gods of ancient Greece. So, in order to understand how exactly, and in what ways, Nietzsche considers the life-affirming gods to contribute towards the nurturing of higher types, we first need to establish what and who exactly is ‘a higher type’, what exactly makes an individual such a type.

In this chapter, I provide a general discussion on how we should approach and interpret ‘higher types’ as a conception. In Section A, as I outline how Nietzsche’s thinking as a whole changed from the early period, I suggest that his conception of ‘higher types’ is essentially an ultimate representation of his idea of ‘human greatness’ capable of creating cultural greatness and new ‘life-affirming’ values, all of which is strongly connected with his life-long concern for ‘suffering’. Then, through Section B and Section C, as I discuss the approach Brian Leiter in his Nietzsche on Morality takes towards ‘higher types’ as a typical example of what I consider to be a problematic and often mistaken type of approach towards ‘higher types’, I argue that though Nietzsche in his works often talks about Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon in connection with

his conception of 'higher types', these historical figures are not 'examples' of higher types, and that Nietzsche in fact provides us with no concrete example of higher types.

Section A: How we should interpret ‘higher types’ as a conception

As we have seen, Nietzsche’s thinking in the early ‘romantic’ period was largely characterised by the influence of both Schopenhauer and Wagner. Being a devotee of Schopenhauer, he accepted the plausibility of Schopenhauer’s pessimism that regards life as fundamentally meaningless and not worth living. At the same time, he was appalled by the critical cultural state of contemporary Germany. Accordingly, while accepting the truth of Schopenhauer’s pessimism, his highest concern and goal was to go beyond his adherence to Schopenhauer’s pessimism, as well as to be in the vanguard of a German cultural revival through the establishment of a German cultural unity. And, being a Wagnerian, he believed that the best possible way to achieve this lay with Wagner’s music-drama, which he considered to be a modern embodiment of pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as a ‘communal’ religion.

Now, the crucial event that led Nietzsche to the middle ‘positivist’ period was his attendance at the Bayreuth festival in 1876. Despite his high expectation for the festival being the key to the flourishing of the German community, he was made to realise there that Wagner’s music-drama was nothing like a new ‘communal’ religion, which could establish the cultural unity of Germany by uniting Germans under common values of a life-affirming nature. As he was surrounded by the audience largely composed of “cultural philistines” (UM: I, 2), whom he despised as the embodiment of everything wrong about contemporary German culture, he felt painfully how his “hope for a renovation and purification of the German spirit” (BT: 20) through Wagner’s music-drama was actually a “hasty” hope (see BT: ASC, 6). And it was this disappointment that led him to separate himself increasingly from the romanticism embodied by Wagner as well as from Schopenhauer’s philosophy, by causing him to see both of them as ‘sick’ and ‘decadent’ (see HAH: II, *Preface*, 2 & GS: 370).

This separation caused two significant changes in the shape and nature of Nietzsche's thinking. Firstly, as I argued in Chapter 1-A, he eventually abandoned religious communitarianism, giving up the idea of the regeneration of Germany through the creation of a new 'communal' religious festival. Instead, from the middle period onwards, what came to constitute the very backbone of his philosophy most decisively was the 'aristocratic individualistic' thinking, in which the flourishing of community presupposes the flourishing of few exceptional individuals whose existence itself forms and shapes the cultural greatness of community. More precisely, my view is that he always possessed both communitarianism and individualistic thinking. And while he gave priority to the former in the early period, he began attaching far greater significance to the latter from the middle period onwards. So, in the end, while he continued to possess a concern for the flourishing of the community generally, his highest value became the nurturing of those few exceptional individuals, whom he calls 'higher types'.

And secondly, from the middle period onwards, Nietzsche began displaying a persistent desire to conquer his former self as a disciple of both Wagner's romanticism and Schopenhauer's pessimism (see EH: *HAH*, 1-4): such desire for self-renewal seems to be reflected particularly in a liking for the image of 'snake' shedding its own skin, which his works of the middle period display (see HAH: II, *Preface*, 2, D: 455 & 573 & GS: *Prelude*, 8). And as a part of his attempt to become his own master, or to become what he often terms 'a free spirit', i.e. "a spirit that has become free, that has again taken possession of itself" (EH: *HAH*, 1), he started developing his 'life-affirming' philosophy, which is intended to be the antipode of what he now perceived to be the 'life-denying' philosophy of Schopenhauer.

That is to say, like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's attitude towards life in the early period was fundamentally 'resignation'. Though his aim was to go beyond his adherence to Schopenhauer's

pessimism, because he accepted the truth of that pessimism his early thinking was nevertheless what was developed from and founded on the denial of life. Accordingly, his idea of 'life-affirmation', as he presented it in his early religious thinking, was rather limited, in the sense that it was only concerned with how to make life 'bearable'. At the same time, what it proposed was an 'indirect' form of life-affirmation that relied on the mediation of a metaphysical third-party such as 'the Olympian gods' and 'the world-artist'. However, from the middle period onwards, as he rejected what he now perceived to be the 'life-denying' pessimism of Schopenhauer, his idea of 'life-affirmation' became increasingly concerned with how not only to 'bear' but also willingly '*embrace*' life as a whole, including its terrible aspects characterised by unavoidable pain and suffering. At the same time, as he now also rejected metaphysics, including that of Schopenhauer which underlay his early religious thinking, his idea of 'life-affirmation' also came to take more a 'direct' form that no longer relied on any metaphysical mediation.

In this sense, it seems to me that, despite all the changes in the shape and nature of his thinking over the different periods, Nietzsche always maintained essentially the same chief concern. That is, on the one hand, from the middle period onwards, as he stopped being someone's disciple, he instead began to act as 'an educator' of humanity, or at least of potential 'higher types', openly and consciously in his works.¹ Yet, on the other hand, he always remained in essence 'a learner', who continuously sought to identify the best possible way to justify and affirm our life in the face of suffering, sought to find out how we could give some positive value to suffering.

Hence, I agree with Tanner when he suggests, "Nietzsche's fundamental concern throughout his life was to plot the relationship between suffering and culture, or cultures. He categorizes

¹ For an excellent discussion on Nietzsche as 'an educator', see Bertram (2009): *passim*, especially Chapter 18.

and grades cultures by the way in which they have coped with the omnipresence of suffering, and assesses moralities by the same criterion. . . . it was of primary ‘existential’ concern to him, because his life was suffering”.² Indeed, one of the key factors that characterise the mature Nietzsche’s life is his continuous struggle against his persistent illness. Soon after his attendance of the Bayreuth festival, his health began deteriorating drastically. He started suffering from severe migraines, which forced him to adopt for the rest of his life a solitary nomadic life-style, travelling around Europe to search for a place that could best help him recover his health. And though it appears that he has always managed to maintain a remarkably stoical attitude towards his own suffering, such a personal situation is clearly reflected in his writings of his mature years, as they increasingly display an ardent yearning for ‘health’, both *physical* and *psychological*, as well as an obsession with ‘suffering’, which seems to be, ironically, in itself profoundly unhealthy in nature (see Chapter 1-C).

And in my view, the mature Nietzsche’s ever-growing interest in the nurturing of potential ‘higher types’, which ultimately became his highest concern and value, is an extension of such a concern, yearning and obsession. That is, I think Tanner correctly articulates something that Nietzsche believes:

Correlative with this preoccupation with how one regards suffering is Nietzsche’s interest in greatness rather than goodness. For there is no greatness without a readiness and capacity to withstand, absorb, and use to best purpose an immense quantity of pain. Greatness, one might say to anticipate, involves putting pain to work; goodness involves attempting to eliminate it. All Nietzsche’s later works will be devoted to exploring this profound difference.³

² Tanner (2000): p. 30

³ Tanner (2000): p. 30

In other words, Nietzsche *does* think that there is a fundamental difference between greatness and goodness. However, it seems to me questionable whether Nietzsche is *right* to hold such understanding of the difference between ‘greatness’ and ‘goodness’. For, though his notion of ‘greatness’ as the attitude and capability to use suffering for positive purposes seems to be in itself plausible, I think that there are clearly cases where ‘goodness’ too actually involves ‘putting pain to work’ instead of just trying to eliminate it completely, where ‘goodness’ and ‘greatness’ actually go together in acceptance of suffering. But, at any rate, as I suggested in Chapter 2-A, even after his separation from Schopenhauer’s pessimism, Nietzsche nonetheless continues to believe that life will forever possess in its nature the terrible aspects characterised by unavoidable pain and suffering, and that there is nothing one can do to stop or eliminate the suffering caused by such nature, i.e. ‘extensional suffering’. Accordingly, what he continues to be truly concerned with is the way people interpret the existence of suffering, how one can best deal with the cause of ‘intensional suffering’. And, from the middle period onwards, he increasingly believes that, in order positively to interpret, justify and accept the existence of suffering in the healthiest and most life-affirming way, one must become, or at least regard oneself as, ‘great’, rather than ‘good’ in the traditional Christian ‘moral’ sense. For, even after abandoning his youthful idea of ‘an aesthetic justification of human existence and the world’, he still always maintains the hostile attitude against ‘moral’ interpretations of the world, as he continues to believe that ‘life’ is something that can never be justified satisfactorily in traditional ‘moral’ terms. In fact, this position of his becomes stiffened further in his late period, as he increasingly considers the Christian ‘moral’ justification of human existence, including the transcendent purpose of life founded on the idea of the perfect afterlife it provides, as well as all those Christian moralised conceptions of ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and ‘sin’ it imposes on people, to be life-denying, unhealthy and actually the major cause of ‘intensional suffering’.

And overall, in my view, it is in this context that Nietzsche in his mature works increasingly becomes less concerned with the existence of the ordinary masses but more keenly interested in the existence of a few selected peculiar and exceptional individuals, as he starts engaging himself in his life-long endeavour “to know of a *new* greatness of man, of a new untrodden way to his enhancement” (BGE: 212). That is, one of the things we commonly find in his mature texts is an intense fascination and admiration for a few selected peculiar and exceptional historical figures, whose extraordinary creativity have brought something new, beautiful and life-affirming to the world. And such fascination and admiration is a part of a larger enterprise that comes to dominate his later thinking as a whole. It is a part of his continuous endeavour to find out what exactly constitutes ‘greatness’ in us moderns, who are, in his view, becoming increasingly decadent and facing the imminent arrival of life-denying ‘nihilism’, a state where we only value shallow and banal things.

And my suggestion is that Nietzsche’s conception of ‘higher types’ – whose nurturing is now his highest goal – should be interpreted as an outcome of such endeavour. It is essentially an ultimate representation of his idea of ‘human greatness’ capable of creating cultural greatness and new ‘life-affirming’ values in the face of the imminent arrival of life-denying ‘nihilism’, through which he also expresses his idea of ‘life-affirmation’, what he identifies as the best possible way positively to interpret, justify and accept the existence of suffering, in order to make ‘life’ as a whole truly *embraceable*.

Section B: Nietzsche's admiration for exceptional historical figures

What, then, constitutes 'greatness' in us moderns? Being the highest object of his concern, it is something that Nietzsche discusses extensively. However, his discussions are often patchy and obscure, and he never gives us a single coherent account. Hence, naturally, there have been commentators who attempt to clarify and set out from all these discussions exactly which specific characteristics make an individual 'great' and 'a higher type'.

One of the commentators who take such an approach is Brian Leiter. According to Leiter, though Nietzsche often expresses admiration for people such as Napoleon and Caesar, it is "creative geniuses" like "Goethe, Beethoven, and (perhaps most importantly) Nietzsche himself" whom Nietzsche regards unequivocally as "paradigms" of higher types. And along with "great creativity", Nietzsche's works also "depict five distinctive, and closely related, characteristics of the higher type of human being", namely, "*solitary and deals with others only instrumentally*", "*seeks burdens and responsibilities, as he is driven towards the completion of a unifying project*", "*essentially healthy and resilient*", "*affirms life, meaning that he is prepared to will the eternal return of his life*" and "*has a distinctive bearing towards others and especially towards himself: he has self-reverence*". Leiter then concludes, "Considered all together, it becomes clear why creative geniuses like Goethe, Beethoven, and Nietzsche himself should be the preferred examples of the higher human being: for the characteristics of the higher type are precisely those that lend themselves to *artistic and creative work*".¹

Now, I think Leiter is correct in some respects. To begin with, 'creativity' is undoubtedly what Nietzsche values as the chief element of 'human greatness': "the great – that is, the creating" (Z: I, 12). And he also seemingly regards 'creativity' as a key element in making our

¹ See Leiter (2002): pp. 115-122

‘life’ *embraceable* in the face of suffering: “Creation – that is the great redemption from suffering, and life’s growing light” (Z: II, 2). Moreover, it is true that, along with ‘life-affirmation’ and ‘health’, which are his chief life-long concerns, Nietzsche often positively talks about those characteristics such as ‘solitariness’ and ‘self-reverence’ in relation to higher types. Furthermore, it is also true that Nietzsche greatly admires ‘creative geniuses’ such as Goethe and Beethoven, and discusses these historical figures in connection with higher types. In addition, there is indeed a passage in EH where Nietzsche appears to describe himself as a higher type, “a well-turned-out person” (EH: *Wise*, 2).

However, I object to Leiter on several accounts. Firstly, I think Leiter is wrong to claim that higher types should preferably be ‘creative geniuses’ engaging in ‘*artistic*’ work. That is, it seems harsh to exclude Napoleon from the paradigms of higher types simply because he was not ‘an artist’. Certainly, as Leiter points out, Nietzsche talks about gifted artists such as Goethe and Beethoven more frequently than about Napoleon, and his comments on these artists are “uniformly positive”.² But then, many of us would surely agree that the idea that all higher types are artists “does seem [somewhat] ridiculous”.³

Moreover, it also seems to me that Nietzsche values the creativity of Napoleon just as much as he values that of Goethe and Beethoven: he clearly regards Napoleon as a ‘creative genius’ and connects him to his conception of higher types, along with these two artists. For, as I suggested in Chapter 1-B, while he does not necessarily affirm or endorse the brutal and destructive aspect of Napoleon that is symbolised by all the atrocities Napoleon committed, he clearly greatly values and affirms the creative and constructive aspect of Napoleon that is symbolised by Napoleon’s cultural achievements such as the establishment of the Napoleonic

² See Leiter (2002): p. 116, *n.* 4

³ See Tanner (2000): p. 59. Tanner makes this point in regard to ‘*Übermenschen*’.

Code and the contribution made towards the development of Egyptology. Further, as I suggested in Chapter 1-C, while Nietzsche takes a keen interest in Napoleon as an ‘*individual*’ who enacts a political law, he is indifferent to what the Napoleonic Code actually offers us. This seemingly suggests that what truly matters to Nietzsche is not the content of Napoleon’s cultural or political achievements, but Napoleon’s creativity itself, or the scale of “a *force majeure* of genius and will . . . strong enough to create a unity out of Europe, a political and *economic* unity for the sake of a world government” found within the existence of Napoleon (EH: CW, 2).

In the light of these, my view is that Nietzsche simply considers a higher type to be an extraordinarily creative individual with superior human greatness who can create cultural greatness and new life-affirming values, and that he does not care so much about what this individual’s occupation is or what type of work this individual engages in. And this view of mine can be substantiated by the fact that Nietzsche often refers to higher types as ‘philosophers of the future’, whom he describes as “*commanders and legislators*” who “*create values*” and “determine the Whither and For What of man” (see BGE: 211).⁴ And he argues that such a philosopher “has the conscience for the over-all development of man” and “will make use of religions for his project of cultivation and education, just as he will make use of whatever political and economic states are at hand” (BGE: 61). Such a description, again, seems to suggest that Nietzsche does not think that a higher type should be someone who engages in ‘*artistic*’ work.

Secondly, contrary to Leiter’s claim, it seems to me questionable whether those historical figures such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon can really be examples of higher types in reality. Certainly, Nietzsche finds these historical figures particularly admirable and thus talks

⁴ Nietzsche’s comments on the nature of ‘philosophers of the future’ correspond with most of those five distinctive characteristics of ‘higher types’ which Leiter proposes (see BGE: 43-44, 61, 205 & 211-212).

about them in connection with 'higher types' as the ultimate representation of his idea of 'human greatness'. And there is clearly nothing wrong with this. For, surely, we all agree that certain people are simply and unquestionably 'great' and 'admirable'. But, now, the question we ought to ask is exactly 'in what sense' Nietzsche claims that these historical figures are admirable. In other words, the issue I shall try to discuss here is whether Nietzsche finds Beethoven as an 'individual' admirable or whether he simply considers certain 'characteristics' of Beethoven to be admirable. For the fact is that every great man, no matter how exceptional he may be, still possesses some boring, trivial and unpleasant features and characteristics, and perform deeds which are far from admirable: just like all of us, being a human, even he would inevitably possess some bad and ugly habits, and would occasionally do foolish or despicable things. However, because we are naturally inclined to focus solely upon his exciting and exceptional features, characteristics and deeds, we often tend to forget this basic fact.

For instance, Dostoevsky is someone whom many of us recognise as a great human being. When we read his novels, we are fascinated by his creativity and acute powers of observation, so that we find him 'great' and 'admirable': Nietzsche too thinks very highly of Dostoevsky, describing him as a "*profound* human being" (TI: IX, 45). But then, when we look through Dostoevsky's personal letters to his second wife, what we discover there is a nervous and occasionally unreliable husband, who is rather miserably in love with his much younger wife, behaves towards her morbidly like a control freak, longs to make love to her constantly, and makes excuses for his gambling habits and begs her for remittance when he gambles away all his money on his journey. Clearly, these particular facets of his are doubtfully attractive and not obviously admirable. Yet, when we are reading his novels and dazzled by his brilliance, even those of us who are familiar with his personal letters tend to forget the existence of these less than admirable facets of his life. As such, we seem to end up thinking that we find him as an

‘individual’ admirable, when in reality, strictly speaking, we might be only admiring certain ‘characteristics’ of his.

Does Nietzsche also tend to forget this basic fact that even Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon, whom he very much admires, inevitably possess some less than admirable features, characteristics and deeds? Presumably he does. For one thing, this sort of tendency is so deep-rooted among us, that it is hard to imagine anyone being capable of escaping from it completely. And for another, in the light of the proclivity to a certain naivety that his writings occasionally display in some contexts, which often results in over-zealous affirmations or careless over-romanticisation, it seems likely that Nietzsche is susceptible to this tendency as much as anyone else, if not more so.

Indeed, in my view, there is a clear lack of authenticity in his discussions of those historical figures such as Beethoven and Napoleon. For, for instance, despite speaking highly of these historical figures, he actually never gives us any precise detailed account of what is so admirable about them. If he found them exceptionally ‘great’ and thus considered them to be examples of higher types, he could surely have provided few small anecdotes about them to help explain and endorse his position. But this is something he fails to do, and consequently his discussions of them remain obscure and unrealistic in nature.

As such, it is a common practice among commentators to find anecdotes from independent biographical studies, in order to redeem Nietzsche’s discussions of the historical figures in question from their obscure and unrealistic nature. So, for instance, Leiter uses Beethoven by Maynard Solomon – which is widely recognised as the standard modern biography of Beethoven – to illustrate and argue that Beethoven actually possessed some of the five

distinctive characteristics of higher types which he – Leiter – proposes, and thus that Beethoven should indeed be regarded as an example of a higher type.⁵

Now, I think there is nothing wrong with this practice itself. Moreover, as far as reading all the passages of Solomon's book to which Leiter refers is concerned, it certainly appears to be the case that Beethoven did possess some of the five distinctive characteristics of higher types which Leiter proposes. However, what I find problematic is Leiter's failure to acknowledge the fact that, by using the same book, we can also illustrate how Beethoven also possessed certain characteristics which Nietzsche would likely find less than admirable and thus reject.

For instance, Solomon, in the same book of his, also provides an absorbing account of the tempestuous relationships between Beethoven, his sister-in-law and his nephew. According to Solomon, Beethoven's brother Casper Carl died of tuberculosis in November 1815, leaving behind his wife Johanna and his nine-year-old son Karl. The last request the dying Casper Carl made was for Karl to be placed under a joint guardianship of Beethoven and Johanna upon his death. Yet, after Casper Carl's death, Beethoven had moved to seize the exclusive guardianship of Karl, while he continually tried to exclude Johanna from any direct communication with Karl in an obsessive manner. This action of his provoked lengthy conflicts and legal battles between him and Johanna over Karl's custody, through which he often took a very hostile attitude towards Johanna, frequently making acrimonious and unfounded accusations against her of being a vicious unworthy mother.⁶ And while showing eagerness to continue monopolising Karl's custody, he was actually an erratic guardian, who held "ambivalent feelings" – of

⁵ See Leiter (2002): pp. 122-123

⁶ See Solomon (2001): pp. 297, 302-303, 305 & 317

affection and hostility – toward his ward, often suffering from “anxieties at his proximity to his nephew”.⁷ Solomon writes,

Beethoven’s attitude toward his young nephew was similarly riddled with contradictions. . . . His repeated protestations of love certainly were not matched by consistently benevolent behavior toward the boy. . . . In November [1816] he took the ten-year-old to task for laxness in his studies and punished him by a deliberate show of coldness: “We walked along together more seriously than usual. Timidly he pressed my hand but found no response” – this on the day preceding the first anniversary of the death of the boy’s father. . . . In subsequent years, when it became apparent to Beethoven that he had not succeeded in breaking the bond between mother and son, he used physical violence against Karl on more than one occasion.⁸

Eventually, being “torn between obedience toward his uncle and the desire to return to his mother”, “Karl attempted suicide in an ultimately successful effort to break away from the domination of his uncle, whose suffocating embrace had at last become unbearable”.⁹

Now, it actually appears to be the case that Beethoven’s intention behind the appropriation of his nephew was fundamentally good.¹⁰ And we may be able to identify some reasonable explanations as to why Beethoven behaved in such an eccentrically crude way, as Solomon attempts to do from a psychological perspective.¹¹ But, nevertheless, the image of Beethoven that arises from this family saga is clearly unpleasant and unattractive: it is simply not ‘great’ at

⁷ Solomon (2001): p. 317

⁸ Solomon (2001): pp. 308-309

⁹ Solomon (2001): pp. 297 & 313

¹⁰ Solomon (2001): pp. 303-304

¹¹ See Solomon (2001): pp. 304-306, 315-316 & 325-328

all. All those characteristics Beethoven displayed in his attempt to deprive a mother of her son, as well as in his mistreatment of his nephew, which appear to be unjust and evidently had harmful effects on the boy, are clearly the kind of characteristics which Nietzsche would likely find less than admirable and thus wish to exclude from the nature of 'higher types'.

Of course, whether or to what extent Nietzsche knew this family saga is unclear. But the fact is that, whatever else is the case, Nietzsche in his works hardly ever makes any reference to those kinds of less than admirable characteristics of Beethoven: though he in the Nachlass does sometimes criticise Beethoven for being a 'romantic' (see, e.g., WP: 106, 838 & 842). And this seems to be the manner in which Nietzsche treats all the historical figures whom he finds admirable and thus connects to 'higher types'. That is, he often focuses only on what he wants to see in them, and turns a blind eye to their features and characteristics which are unbecoming to 'higher types'. This, I think, gives us good reason to suspect that what Nietzsche actually finds admirable is not exactly Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon as 'individuals', but only their certain selected 'characteristics', and thus that these historical figures, as 'individuals', cannot really be examples of higher types in reality.

But then, perhaps, we have so far approached Nietzsche's conception of 'higher types' in a wrong manner: this leads us to another aspect of Leiter's interpretation of 'higher types' that I find objectionable. That is, Leiter claims, while speaking of the five distinctive characteristics of higher types which he proposes, that "Taken together, they are plainly sufficient to make someone a higher type in Nietzsche's view, though it is not obvious that any one of these is necessary, and various combinations often seem sufficient for explaining how Nietzsche speaks of higher human beings".¹² However, contrary to Leiter's claim, it seems to me possible that what makes someone a higher types in Nietzsche's view is not necessarily some combination of

¹² Leiter (2002): p. 116

distinctive characteristics, because there actually seems to be a way of finding someone ‘great’ and ‘admirable’ not in terms of individual characteristics he possesses.

For instance, F. R. Leavis in his essay Memories of Wittgenstein describes Wittgenstein – whom many of us consider ‘great’ – as follows.

Wittgenstein . . . was a complete human being, subtle, self-critical and un-self-exalting. When, in characterizing him, one touches on traits that seem to entail adverse or limiting judgements, one is not intending to impute defects in his potential full humanity.¹³

By describing Wittgenstein as ‘a complete human being’ and as possessing ‘full humanity’, Leavis is clearly not talking about a combination of characteristics found in Wittgenstein, suggesting that Wittgenstein was entirely free of less than admirable characteristics and instead full of admirable characteristics: Leavis makes it clear in the essay that Wittgenstein possessed weaknesses and vices. Rather, as Hamilton points out, what Leavis is talking about, what Leavis considers exceptional, is “Wittgenstein’s spirit”, the whole of his inner life, the way he lived up to his humanity in a exemplary manner. And in Leavis’ view, not only Wittgenstein’s admirable characteristics such as his intellectual virtues, but many of his weaknesses and vices too are expressive of this exceptional spirit of his: they are all manifestations of his nature as ‘a complete human being’. This is why Leavis claims in the above passage that even those less than admirable characteristics of Wittgenstein, which entail adverse or limiting judgments, do not undermine his ‘full humanity’.¹⁴

¹³ Leavis (1982): p. 135

¹⁴ See Hamilton (1998): pp. 329-330

I think Leavis' way of understanding Wittgenstein's 'greatness' makes us see that there is something superficial about Leiter's approach to the conception of higher types. That is, what Leiter's approach fails to address is something important, namely, the fact that a characteristic that is 'admirable' in a certain context could also equally be 'less than admirable' in different contexts.

At one level, the problem with Leiter is that he does not really explain why those five distinctive characteristics of higher types he proposes are particularly admirable. As we saw earlier, one such distinctive characteristic is '*solitary and deals with others only instrumentally*'. Leiter suggests, "The great man approaches others instrumentally not only because of his fundamental proclivity for solitude, but because of another distinguishing characteristic: he is consumed by his work, his responsibilities, his projects".¹⁵ Certainly, as Leiter points out, Nietzsche writes in BGE, "A human being who strives for something great considers everyone he meets on his way either as a means or as a delay and obstacle – or as a temporary resting place" (BGE: 273). But Leiter – and the same can be said of Nietzsche, for that matter – does not really explain what '*deals with others only instrumentally*' actually means, or why and in what sense it is a particularly exceptional characteristic. For instance, does the great man willingly and pleasurably exploit others purely for his own end, as if they were slaves? Or, does he reluctantly use others for achieving a greater communal good or altruist end, while showing some respect to them, because he simply has no option but to do so? And if the former is the case, is it really so admirable?

At another level, what Leiter fails to take into account is the fact that those five distinctive characteristics, or any characteristic for that matter, come to have different meaning and significance depending on the person who possesses it: specifically, for instance, depending on

¹⁵ Leiter (2002): p. 117

the role he plays in his life, and also depending on his individuality and sensibility. Certainly, there are some characteristics which can plausibly be thought of as admirable in any individual in any life circumstance, such as ‘courage’. But then, whereas ‘ruthlessness’ may be an admirable characteristic in a soldier fighting a battle, it would surely be manifested as a less than admirable characteristic in a nurse taking care of disabled children. Likewise, while my ‘meticulous’ disposition might help me become exceptional as a philosopher in my academic life, this very disposition of mine could also equally make me become an abominably difficult and fastidious husband in my private life. Further, in a person with a certain individuality and sensibility, ‘*self-reverence*’ can be an honest self-recognition and self-appreciation of his talents and superiority, which could even lead to a genuine generosity towards the others. But then, in another person with a different individuality, ‘*self-reverence*’ can be nothing more than a bloated egoism or a shameless arrogance.¹⁶

Indeed, if we were to understand and judge someone’s ‘greatness’ purely in terms of individual ‘characteristics’ in the manner we have done earlier, it would seem that we can never really admire someone as an ‘individual’: since, as I said, every one of us, being a human, inevitably possesses some boring, trivial and less than admirable features and characteristics, and we all also act stupidly, at least on occasion. But this just does not sound right, because we clearly do find certain historical figures great and admirable as ‘individuals’, even when we are

¹⁶ This is why Leavis, in his above-mentioned essay, describes what he considers to be Wittgenstein’s weaknesses and vices as follows: “The fact is that the disinterested regardlessness in which his genius manifested itself was, as a matter of habit, apt to be a disconcerting lack of consideration; his ‘single-mindedness’ an innocent egotism. I have been asked to agree that Wittgenstein was cruel, but I think that description misleading, and I emphasize the ‘innocent’” (Leavis 1982: p. 137). As Hamilton suggests, “For Leavis, Wittgenstein’s egoism was not mere egoism but was transformed by his sense of it as expressive of Wittgenstein’s spirit. But no doubt Leavis would have thought that, in another man who did not possess the kind of admirable spirit of which Wittgenstein was possessed, the egoism in question would be cruel” (Hamilton 1998: p. 331).

perfectly aware of their unattractive weaknesses, and even when we are actually repelled by some of their unpleasant vices. And in part, what makes us admire someone like Dostoevsky as an ‘individual’, as a “*profound* human being” (TI: IX, 45), is surely the fact that, in him, not all but many of his less than admirable characteristics – such as his highly-strung and obsessive nature – contributed to, or became a part of, his whole greatness in some way, that he was not overwhelmed by them but instead somehow managed to incorporate them into his unique and exceptional individuality and sensibility, which are clearly detectable in his novels.

In fact, Nietzsche clearly recognises and affirms this idea of one’s trivial and less than admirable facets and characteristics contributing towards one’s whole greatness. For instance, as we will see in Chapter 4-A, in this context, in GS he speaks of the necessity of giving ‘style’ to one’s character: “*One thing is needful*. – To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye” (GS: 290). The basic idea is that we should become artist of our own life and try to make of ourselves artworks by giving a synthetic unity to our character: the ability which he values almost more than anything in his mature works and thus connects to his conception of higher types. Likewise, as we will also see, in the same context, in his mature works he increasingly attempts to give some positive value to all those egoistic characteristics and emotions such as greed, envy, vanity and lust, which Christianity condemns as ‘vices’. And while he never goes so far as to claim that those egoistic characteristics and emotions are simply in themselves ‘good’ and ‘admirable’, he clearly seems to regard them as essential to much that is good and valuable in life, as part of what can spur people on to human greatness that we all admire. And he is no doubt right on this, since, for instance, it is a well-known fact that many of the greatest artists were extremely self-obsessed, and that what often motivated them to produce

their masterpieces was, among many things, their envy towards others who had already done so.¹⁷

In the light of all these points, I think we could plausibly suggest that, contrary to Leiter's claim, Nietzsche's conception of 'higher types' is not just about some distinctive characteristics being added up in various ways. Certainly, Nietzsche greatly values and cares about certain individual characteristics such as 'creativity' and 'life-affirmation'. And he undoubtedly ascribes these characteristics to higher types. But, at the same time, his conception of 'higher types' also crucially involves how all the individual pieces of one's character, including those that are less than admirable, are placed and fitted together. That is, in Nietzsche's view, higher types are not simply individuals with certain admirable characteristics, but they are also integrated individuals who possess a unique and exceptional individuality and sensibility, and in whom there ultimately exists an undeniable sense of unity.

Those historical figures such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon are surely exceptionally creative and life-affirming, as well as possessed of a 'style' of their own. So, can we conclude that they are examples of higher types after all? I think there is still some doubt. For, the problem is that, as I suggested, there is a clear lack of authenticity in Nietzsche's discussions of these historical figures. In fact, it is evident that these historical figures are often idealised or mythologized in his writings to some degree.¹⁸

In Chapter 2-A, I suggested that Nietzsche in his works frequently creates 'archetypes' as an 'instructive' means to illustrate and express his ideas. In BT, even by going against historical facts sometimes, he intentionally transforms Homer into the archetype of Greek epic, Archilochus into the archetype of Greek lyric and Socrates into the archetype of rationalism.

¹⁷ See Hamilton (2009): p. 66

¹⁸ See Tanner (2000): p. 76

Likewise, by idealising the ancient Greeks and their religion[s], he transforms them into the archetypes of – what he perceives to be – the ideal ‘life-affirming’ life and the ideal ‘life-affirming’ religion[s], through which he instructs us concerning with what kind of ‘religion’ we could possibly overcome our pessimistic outlook on life. And such an inclination of his is strongly present throughout most of his works. Even after BT, he continues to idealise and use the Greeks as the archetype of the ideal ‘life-affirming’ life. And in many of his mature works, by setting this archetype over against what he considers to be the ‘life-denying’ decadent life symbolised by Christianity, he attempts to illustrate and illuminate his mature idea of ‘life-affirmation’ and his criticism of Christianity.

And in my view, as Tanner similarly suggests, most of the historical figures who appear in Nietzsche’s mature writings are also essentially ‘archetypes’: “almost all proper names in his texts stand not for individuals, but for movements, tendencies, ways of living”.¹⁹ For instance, in many of his mature works, Nietzsche repeatedly criticises David Strauss and Wagner. But he also remarks in EH,

I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity. Thus I attacked David Strauss – more precisely, the *success* of a senile book with the “cultured” people in Germany: I caught this culture in the act. I thus attacked Wagner – more precisely, the falseness, the half-couth instincts of our “culture” which mistakes the subtle for the rich, and the late for the great (EH: *Wise*, 7).

So, ‘David Strauss’ and ‘Wagner’ whom Nietzsche criticises in his works are not necessarily actual historical individuals. They are transformed by him into the symbolic embodiments of

¹⁹ Tanner (2000): pp. 24-25

what he perceives to be everything wrong about contemporary German culture, which he uses as a means to illustrate and illuminate his cultural criticisms (see EH: UM, 1-2).²⁰ And likewise, my suggestion is that those exceptional historical figures such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon, whom Nietzsche connects to his conception of 'higher types' in his works, are also not necessarily actual historical individuals. They are best interpreted as 'archetypes', who are purposely idealised by him to express his idea of 'human greatness', to represent certain characteristics which he values, admires and thus expects to find in higher types. In this sense, we cannot really consider Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon as 'actual historical individuals' to be examples of higher types in reality.

²⁰ See Young (2006): pp. 34-35

Section C: Who are examples of ‘higher types’?

Who are examples of higher types, if those historical figures such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon are best interpreted as ‘archetypes’ representing certain characteristics of higher types? As my final objection against Leiter’s interpretation of higher types, I suggest that, despite talking extensively about higher types, Nietzsche in his works actually provides us with no concrete example of higher types.

Considering the extensive and obscure nature of Nietzsche’s discussions of higher types, the approach that Leiter takes towards higher types, i.e. the attempt to set out from the discussions which specific characteristics make an individual ‘a higher type’, is certainly useful for understanding Nietzsche’s view of the nature of higher types. However, what I find problematic is the way Leiter seemingly presumes that Nietzsche possesses a fixed solid image of higher types and reveals their distinctive characteristics one by one from this image. For, my view is that Nietzsche never at any point fully succeeded in establishing a clear and consistent idea of what exactly constitutes ‘greatness’ in us moderns: his conception of ‘higher types’ is neither as solid nor as plausible as Leiter seemingly thinks.

For instance, one of the key clues for understanding Nietzsche’s conception of ‘higher types’ lies with his conception of ‘nobility’, since he clearly regards higher types as people who are ‘noble’: “today the concept of greatness entails being noble” (BGE: 212). Indeed, many of Nietzsche’s passages which Leiter quotes to support his interpretation of higher types are passages on ‘nobility’, and hence what Leiter proposes as the distinctive characteristics of higher types are also practically the distinctive characteristics of those whom Nietzsche considers to be ‘noble’.¹ However, what Leiter wrongly overlooks is the fact that Nietzsche’s

¹ See Leiter (2002): pp. 117 & 120-122

discussion of ‘nobility’ is also obscure and confusing. For, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, I agree with Hamilton that Nietzsche in his works actually presents – at least – two different conceptions of ‘nobility’ and ‘life-affirmation’, without clearly distinguishing one conception from another, and also without properly working out either conception.² And in my view, this failure of Nietzsche’s to establish a clear plausible conception of ‘nobility’ inevitably contributes to the unstable and obscure nature of his conception of ‘higher types’ itself.

Moreover, what Leiter also fails to address is the fact of how problematically extravagant and unrealistic Nietzsche’s conception of higher types really is. For instance, as I mentioned, Nietzsche often refers to higher types as ‘philosophers of the future’, whom he describes as “*commanders and legislators*” who “*create values*” and “determine the Whither and For What of man” (BGE: 211). And he claims that such a philosopher “has the conscience for the over-all development of man” and “will make use of religions for his project of cultivation and education, just as he will make use of whatever political and economic states are at hand” (BGE: 61). Now, these claims of his are interesting, since they indicate that, contrary to the popular view of his being anti-religious, Nietzsche actually seems to consider ‘religions’ to be an important social tool both with an educational function and with a socio-political function of controlling the masses. But, here, the problem is that his description of ‘philosophers of the future’ as a whole is so grand, that it is hard to see how anyone could actually live up to it: clearly, even Goethe, Beethoven and Nietzsche himself, whom Leiter regards as the preferred examples of higher types, never actually came close to being like the ‘philosophers of the future’ he describes.

And we can make a similar observation on many of the other remarks Nietzsche makes on higher types. That is, those remarks are often exceedingly grand to the point where they are not

² See Hamilton (2000): pp. 169-170

just highly improbable, but also seemingly tinged with the same sort of ‘mythic quality’ that we recognise in his genealogical accounts (see Chapter 2-A), which make his conception of ‘higher types’ something too unrealistic to be plausible. Even if we were to suppose that his conception of ‘higher types’ is a pure ‘ideal’ through and through, we would still feel that it is too extravagant and hardly achievable.

It is evident that Nietzsche has some firm ideas as to what sort of characteristics he wishes to ascribe to higher types: for instance, as we saw, he wants them to be exceptionally ‘creative’, ‘life-affirming’ and possessed of ‘style’ of their own. Why, then, does his conception of higher types end up being something not just unstable and obscure but also unrealistic and almost mythic? My view is that this is because, while his conception of higher types is indeed an ultimate representation of his idea of ‘human greatness’, it is also essentially a product of his various fantasies, a fluid compound made up of his ever-changing longings and desires for certain characteristics, many of which he himself could not acquire. That is, ‘higher types’ is one of those conceptions of his whose full significance cannot be grasped without giving some consideration to the ‘personal’ nature of his writings.

Let me start clarifying my view. In Chapter 1-C, against those commentators who assume that what we find in Nietzsche’s works is the *real* ‘Nietzsche’, I argued that such an assumption is wrong, because the ‘Nietzsche’ we find in his works is different from the ‘Nietzsche’ we find in his personal letters. Hence, I suggested that, in order to understand who the *real* ‘Nietzsche’ is, we must take both of these two different sets of images of him into consideration to some degree, and that this also means that we cannot always take every claim Nietzsche makes in his works at its face value, interpreting it literally as what ‘Nietzsche’ *really* thinks and believes, i.e. as his all things considered opinion or his truthful view of a matter.

And in my view, it is precisely such a wrong assumption that causes Leiter wrongly to claim that Nietzsche himself is an example of higher types. Certainly, as Leiter also notices, there is a passage in EH where Nietzsche appears to describe himself as a higher type, “a well-turned-out person” (EH: *Wise*, 2). But it is clear to me that Nietzsche himself is *not* an example of a higher type. For one thing, the description of ‘a well-turned-out person’ in the passage is hardly what could plausibly be regarded as a truthful depiction of Nietzsche, as I shall illustrate shortly: likewise, Nietzsche also seems very far from having those five distinctive characteristics of ‘higher types’ which Leiter proposes. And for another, what Leiter fails to recognise is the fact that not only in this particular passage but also throughout EH Nietzsche often presents a very misleading picture of himself purposely.

In EH, which can be categorised as his autobiography written near the end of his career, Nietzsche eulogises himself in an audacious manner. As its chapter headings indicate, he tells us boastfully why he is ‘so wise’ and ‘so clever’, why he writes ‘such good books’, and why he is a man of ‘destiny’. Basically, he portrays his life as something wonderful and successful. However, we know today, from reliable biographical studies of Nietzsche,³ that his life was actually not as wonderful and successful as he portrays it to be. For instance, he had to abandon the life of a university professor, chiefly owing to his deteriorating health, but also because students were no longer attending his lectures because they had lost all interest in his teaching. He was rejected by Lou Salomé when he proposed to her: an experience by which he was deeply humiliated and hurt. Contrary to his claim in EH of having readers all around Europe (see EH: *Books*, 2), his works actually sold very poorly, as the public showed complete indifference to them. He had to endure constant torments from severe migraines throughout his mature years, as his health never stopped deteriorating. Basically, despite his undeniable

³ See, e.g., Hollingdale (1999) & Kaufmann (1974): pp. 21-71

originality and brilliance, he was still a frustrated individual who had to experience various hardships, failures, rejections and disappointments, just like all of us. George Orwell remarks in one of his essays, whose subject for discussion is Salvador Dali's autobiography, "Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats".⁴ Clearly, in many and significant ways, Nietzsche's life was 'a series of defeats', even from the outside. And in EH as his autobiography, where Nietzsche gives a very good account of himself, though many of the things he says are undoubtedly true, he is also clearly 'lying'.

If EH as Nietzsche's autobiography cannot be really trusted for its honesty, how should we treat it? In the above-mentioned essay on Dali's autobiography, Orwell also remarks,

However, even the most flagrantly dishonest book . . . can without intending it give a true picture of its author. Dali's recently published *Life* comes under this heading. Some of the incidents in it are flatly incredible, others have been rearranged and romanticized, and not merely the humiliation but the persistent ordinariness of everyday life has been cut out. . . . But as a record of fantasy . . . , it has great value. Here, then, are some of the episodes in Dali's life, from his earliest years onward. Which of them are true and which are imaginary hardly matters: the point is that this is the kind of thing that Dali would have *liked* to do.⁵

At one level, I think that we could indeed plausibly read EH as Nietzsche's 'record of fantasy', in which many of his longings and desires are revealed or expressed in an implicit manner. For

⁴ Orwell (2000a): p. 248

⁵ Orwell (2000a): p. 248

instance, Nietzsche claims in the book that “my ancestors were Polish noblemen” (EH: *Wise*, 3). Now, it has been proved today through reliable biographical studies of Nietzsche that his claim is simply not true. But, on this line of thought, the falsity of the claim is in a sense not necessarily a serious issue, because what the claim valuably reveals to us is a special attraction that the idea of ‘being a descendant of Polish noblemen’ holds for Nietzsche. And it is indeed true that his writings often display a strong liking for the aristocracy in general, as we typically see from his many affirmative remarks on ‘masters’ as ‘the nobles’ of ancient hierarchical societies.

Likewise, we could plausibly suppose that when Nietzsche in EH gives a description of ‘a well-turned-out person’, i.e. a higher type, and claims that he has just described himself, he has in fact described not himself as he actually is, but the kind of person he ‘would have *liked* to’ become and still *wants* to become. Certainly, some of the things stated in the description might possibly apply to Nietzsche himself to some degree. But then, when he claims in the description that ‘a well-turned-out person’ like him is someone who “comes to terms with himself, with others; he knows how to *forget*” (EH: *Wise*, 2), he clearly seems to present a very misleading picture of himself. For, for instance, if he had ever really managed to come to terms with Wagner, particularly over their separation, he would probably not have kept criticising Wagner obsessively to the very end of his career as he did in reality. Moreover, if he had been really capable of coming to term with himself, he would surely not have had to misrepresent his life in the book in the way he did in the first place. So, rather, by claiming such, he is actually indicating that he *wants* to become able to ‘come to terms with himself and with others’.

In fact, it seems to me that EH as a whole is deeply characterised by such a desire or longing to ‘come to terms with himself and with others’. Between the preface and the first chapter of the book, Nietzsche writes,

On this perfect day, when everything is ripening and not only the grape turns brown, the eye of the sun just fell upon my life: I looked back, I looked forward, and never saw so many and such good things at once . . . *How could I fail to be grateful to my whole life?* – and so I tell my life to myself (EH: p. 221).

It is presumably Nietzsche himself who knows more than anyone that his life has been in many and significant ways ‘a series of defeats’: as he reflects on his life, he must have realised how it had not all gone in the way he would have liked. But, as the passage indicates, through the process of writing EH, he *wants* to perceive his life to be something wonderful, filled with ‘so many and such good things’: he clearly does not wish to become bitter or have regrets about his life for what it has been and for what it is. In this sense, at another level, I think that we could also plausibly read EH as Nietzsche’s ultimate attempt at ‘self-justification’, in which his self-glorification – or, even self-mythologization – is in part a result of his attempt to come to terms with his whole life, to force himself to see it as something for which he can be ultimately grateful.⁶

So, for instance, in EH, Nietzsche positively talks about his persistent illness. He claims that all the special abilities of his are products of the painful days of his intense illness (see EH: *Wise*, 1). He also claims that, for “a typically healthy person” like him, “being sick can even become an energetic *stimulus* for life, for living *more*” (EH: *Wise*, 2). Now, his claims may be truthful in some respects. It is indeed likely that many of his insights into various matters were gained from what he calls “the perspective of the sick” (EH: *Wise*, 1), and that what helped him to overcome his adherence to Schopenhauer’s pessimism and kept motivating him to develop his own

⁶ Of course, there is no doubt that Nietzsche’s self-mythologization in EH is also aimed at others, to promote himself as a significant man.

‘life-affirming’ philosophy was partly his struggle against his illness, his “will to health, to *life*” (see EH: *Wise*, 2; also EH: *HAH*, 4). But then, as many of his personal letters typically indicate, his illness was clearly far more wretched and burdensome to him in reality. Despite his remarkably stoical attitude towards his own suffering, and despite his life-long attempt to *embrace* his life entirely, it is still natural to presume that he never actually wanted to become tormented by the persistent illness if he did not have to. In the light of a strong desire for ‘health’, both *physical* and *psychological*, which his writings often express, we could plausibly presume that he always hated his illness fundamentally and never actually stopped wanting his health to recover.

In fact, it seems likely that even at this point of writing EH, Nietzsche would gladly, or at least would be very much tempted to, exchange his life tormented with the illness for a similar life without the illness. However, as we will see in Chapter 4-C, this sort of ‘fantasy’ is precisely what one of his mature ideas of life-affirmation rejects as pointless and life-denying. So, in EH, as he makes his ultimate attempt not to fall for such a sort of fantasy, he desperately tries to reinterpret the reality of his illness and portray it positively, in order to make himself believe that even his illness has been after all something valuable and useful to him. To put it another way, as the years of his nomadic life-style to try to regain his health had never borne fruit, at this particular point of his life he recognises more firmly than ever that his persistent illness is, and will forever be, an inevitable terrible aspect of his life, and that there is nothing he can do to stop or eliminate the unavoidable suffering caused by it, i.e. ‘extensional suffering’. So, in this – what could plausibly be read as – ultimate ‘self-therapeutic’ book written especially for him as ‘a sufferer’, he tries interpret positively, to justify and to accept the existence of this unavoidable ‘extensional suffering’ of his in what he has so far discovered to be the most healthy and life-affirming way, in order at least to free himself of any ‘intensional suffering’:

namely, by trying to convince himself that he has ultimately acquired – what he understands as – ‘greatness’ as the attitude and capability to use suffering for positive purposes (see Chapter 2-A & 3-A). And, in this way, by not giving negativity to his illness, by not transforming it into an objection to his life, he who cannot get his *physical* health back is at least trying to regain and protect his *psychological* health.

Such an attempt of Nietzsche’s to protect his *psychological* health can also be seen in another example, which is more directly connected with the main theme of this thesis. Nietzsche claims in EH,

I have never reflected on questions that are none – I have not wasted myself. Really *religious* difficulties, for example, I don’t know from experience. It has escaped me altogether in what way I was supposed to be “sinful.” Likewise, I lack any reliable criterion for recognizing the bite of conscience: according to what one *hears* about it, the bite of conscience does not seem respectable to me. I do not want to leave an action in the lurch *afterward*; I should prefer to exclude the bad result, the *consequences*, from the question of value as a matter of principle. . . . “God,” “immorality of the soul,” “redemption,” “beyond” – without exception, concepts to which I never devoted any attention, or time; not even as a child (EH: *Clever*, 1).

Now, this claim is simply untruthful, because Nietzsche clearly has spent most of his life thinking about these religious difficulties and conceptions in one way or another. Elsewhere in the book, he declares that “I only attack things when every personal quarrel is excluded, when any background of bad experiences is lacking. . . . When I wage war against Christianity I am entitled to this because I have never experienced misfortunes and frustrations from that quarter” (EH: *Wise*, 7). But, again, such a declaration cannot be truthful, because Christian moralised

conceptions such as of ‘guilt’ and ‘bad conscience’ are precisely what he has always considered to be a wrong and unhealthy interpretation of the fact of ‘extensional suffering’, by which he himself has been often tormented.

Why does Nietzsche feel the need to go to all the trouble of presenting himself so misleadingly on this matter? Hamilton seems to me to get the matter right when he suggests,

Nietzsche represents himself in our passage [the above-quoted passage of EH: *Clever*, 1] as someone, above all, as *self-contained*: firstly, in his claim never to have wasted or squandered himself, secondly in his suggestion that the consequence of an action are to be ignored. In both cases, we are dealing with a longing to conserve energy, to retain order and control in a world, in a personality, both of which resist order and control. This is not, I think, or not only a kind of neurotic desire to order experience. It is, rather, or perhaps at the same time, the expression of horror at a dreadful sense of loss – not loss of this or that, but loss as such, at the fact that life is loss, that to live is to be assailed by a sense of loss that can never be made good.⁷

Nietzsche’s life-long confrontation with those religious issues such as ‘God’ and ‘guilt’ is no doubt a part of his continuous attempt to cope with his illness and to keep himself free of ‘intensional suffering’, in order to protect his *psychological* health. But, at this late stage of his life, in writing EH, he now recognises how this life-long confrontation of his, and also, more generally, his life-long obsession with ‘suffering’ in general, have actually been profoundly ‘unhealthy’ and ironically undermined his *psychological* health all this time. After claiming his indifference to those religious issues, in the book in question he also declares that he is actually

⁷ I am grateful to Christopher Hamilton for allowing me to read his unpublished conference paper “Nietzsche and Religious Melancholy”, from which the quote comes, and to which I have also widely referred for writing this part.

“much more interested in a question on which the “salvation of humanity” depends far more than on any theologians’ curio: the question of *nutrition*”, and that his real concern has always lain with issues such as what one should eat and drink, which city or town is the best place to live in, and so on (see EH: *Clever*, 1-2). Yet, he also remarks lamentably, “My experiences in this matter are as bad as possible; I am amazed how late I heard this question . . . Indeed, till I reached a very mature age I always ate *badly*: morally speaking, “impersonally”, “selflessly,” “altruistically” – for the benefit of cooks and other fellow Christians” (EH: *Clever*, 1). So, clearly, he considers his life-long reflection on those religious issues to be ‘*self-waste*’: he feels that, rather than wasting himself by spending a vast amount of time consuming and digesting those unhealthy kinds of thought as he did, he should have instead devoted himself more to those truly important questions and issues, engaged himself solely in healthy kinds of thought which could enrich his life. In this sense, he is deeply afflicted with a sense of loss.

It is not just EH in which we see this sense of loss. Most of Nietzsche’s other mature writings also often express profound fear of being afflicted with a sense of loss, or more specifically, what Hamilton above describes as ‘horror at a dreadful sense of loss – not loss of this or that, but loss as such, at the fact that life is loss, that to live is to be assailed by a sense of loss that can never be made good’. So, as we will see in Chapter 4, one of the things to which Nietzsche in his mature years increasingly devotes himself is an attempt to reduce and minimize self-waste, or even to eliminate any self-waste: what Tanner describes as Nietzsche’s “programme for showing that nothing in one’s past should be regretted, that there need be no waste”.⁸ Yet, of course, life is something that is fundamentally characterised by compromises in many and various ways. No matter how hard one tries, there will still inevitably be in one’s

⁸ Tanner (2000): p. 5

life some forms of waste or errors which simply cannot be made good: one will forever be haunted by a dreadful sense of unredeemable loss in one way or another.

However, this fact of existence is something which Nietzsche often refuses to acknowledge or accept throughout his life: as Hamilton puts it, “What he could not accept was that there were parts of his life that were simply through and through forms of mistake: of waste or pointless activity”.⁹ Hence, even at the point of writing *EH* near the end of his career, he still claims, “even the *blunders* of life have their own meaning and value – the occasional side roads and wrong roads, the delays, “modesties,” seriousness wasted on tasks that are remote from *the* task” (*EH: Clever*, 9). And certainly, throughout the book, he tries his best to find in many of the *blunders* of his life ‘their own meaning and value’, so that they would not become unredeemable losses. Yet, it is evident that, when it comes to his life-long confrontation with those religious issues, he simply struggles. For, he can clearly see that it has “darkened his horizon to no avail”,¹⁰ and that it is a loss which he simply cannot make good or for which he cannot make up. But, at this late stage of his life, as he makes his ultimate attempt to come to terms with his life as a whole, the last thing he wants to do is to become resentful of it, to become regretful of the wasted time and lost opportunities. So, he tries to pretend and make himself believe that he has never really wasted himself with those unhealthy religious issues, in order ultimately to protect his *psychological* health, as well as to bring some sort of closure and move on with his life.

In my view, those elements we identify in *EH*, namely, ‘fantasy’, ‘self-justification’ and ‘the protection of *psychological* health’, are also equally extensively present in Nietzsche’s

⁹ Hamilton (2009): p. 81

¹⁰ See Hamilton (2009): p. 107

discussions of 'higher types'. And they are crucial for understanding his conception of higher types.

That is to say, as I have emphasized, one notable factor that sets Nietzsche apart from other Western philosophers is the 'personal' nature of his writings: compared with the traditional philosophers' writings, Nietzsche's writings – his views and beliefs in general – are often in nature more closely connected to his own individual characteristics, more deeply bound up and invested with his personal experiences, circumstances, needs, desires, moods, feelings, emotions, inclinations, tastes, senses and so on. In the light of this, if we indeed are to take seriously his claim of that "every great philosophy" is "the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir" (BGE: 6), we could plausibly suppose that what is expressed in his conception of higher types is not simply his idea of 'human greatness', and that many of the characteristics which he ascribes to higher types via the various 'archetypes' such as Goethe and Napoleon are not just what he as 'a philosopher' values and recognises to be necessary for us modern to become 'great', but also what he as 'a unique individual living a unique life' values, desires and fantasises about possessing.

Further, it also seems to me that, along with this element of 'fantasy', Nietzsche's conception of higher types also contains an element of 'self-justification', in the sense that some of the characteristics he ascribes to higher types are also what he himself possesses and wishes to glorify. For instance, he often positively discusses 'solitude' in connection with higher types (see, e.g., BGE: 26 & 212). By 'solitude', he certainly does not simply mean *physical* solitude. For the most part, what he places the most emphasis on is the importance of *psychological* solitude, the importance of having the ability to be "always in his own company, whether he associates with books, human beings, or landscapes" (EH: *Wise*, 2), i.e. the ability to establish and possess one's own – independent – standard of value-judgement. And this is clearly a

characteristic which he ascribes to higher types, as we will see. But then, if we are to take into account the ‘personal’ nature of his writings, we could also reasonably suppose that when he ascribes ‘solitude’ to higher types, what he also has in mind is his own enforced solitude. That is, it is also a characteristic which Nietzsche both as a lonely sick wanderer who clearly suffers from a serious deficiency of human warmth against his will, and as an unpopular philosopher who is no doubt frustrated by the unexpected indifference of the world towards his works, wants to glorify, so that he can positively interpret, justify and accept his own ‘solitude’ in order to protect his *psychological* health.¹¹

But if what I have just suggested is indeed correct, that is, if Nietzsche’s conception of higher types is indeed not only an ultimate representation of his idea of ‘human greatness’ but also essentially a product of his personal fantasies, why does it still end up being something so unstable and obscure? I think that, in order fully to explain the instability and obscurity surrounding the nature of higher types, the disposition of Nietzsche as ‘a unique individual’ must be taken into consideration to some degree. That is, in my view, Nietzsche’s failure to establish a single solid conception of ‘higher types’, which is capable of spelling out the exact nature of higher types properly, is largely to do with the fact that his own longings for certain characteristics often change, because of his ever-changing moods.

There is no doubt that the fascination and admiration for a few selected peculiar and exceptional historical figures that we find in Nietzsche’s writings is a part of his continuous endeavour to figure out what exactly constitutes ‘greatness’ in us moderns. But, in the light of

¹¹ In this respect, I greatly sympathize with Appel’s interpretation of ‘higher types’ as Nietzsche’s “strategy to fulfill the psychic need for comradeship [which] involves the creation of a fantasy world populated by idealised friends” (Appel 1999: p. 104). For Nietzsche’s mature texts clearly express terrible deprivation of human warmth and friendships: he desperately craves someone with whom he can share his ideas and the joys of life (see, e.g., BGE: *From High Mountains*, pp. 240-245).

what I have suggested, these historical figures are also clearly subjects of his ‘personal’ fascination and admiration: though they are idealised or mythologized in his texts, they basically represent types of being with certain distinctive characteristics whom Nietzsche as ‘a unique individual’ is attracted to. And, given the fact that Nietzsche famously speaks of his love of ‘masks’, it is highly likely that he actually often fantasized being these historical figures, often played and “experimented” with these “fantasy identities”.¹² But, now, what strikes us most is how broad the range of these fantasy identities is: it includes Goethe, Beethoven, Napoleon, Wagner, Socrates and Jesus. They are certainly all exceptionally creative, and some of them are clearly life-affirming: the characteristics which Nietzsche as ‘a philosopher’ values and ascribes to higher types. In this sense, his fascination and admiration for these historical figures is not aimless or groundless. But, still, many of these historical figures are so different from each other, that we cannot help feeling that there is a certain lack of clear direction and self-control in his admiration and fascination.

Robert Nozick remarks that, compared with “Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Marcus Aurelius’ *Mediations*, Montaigne’s *Essays*, and the essays of Samuel Johnson”, which are “books that set out what a mature person can believe – someone fully grown up”, Nietzsche’s writings are “less evidently grown-up ones”.¹³ And I think there is indeed something not ‘fully grown up’ about the admiration and fascination for those historical figures which we find in Nietzsche’s writings. In some way, it almost resembles that of a child, who today wants to be a pirate, the next day a cowboy, or fantasises about being both a professional footballer and an astronaut at the same time. A child certainly has his reasons for wanting to be each of these various characters. But a child is fundamentally impressionable, and his fascination is predominantly impulsive, not

¹² See Fraser (2002): p. 97

¹³ Nozick (2006): p. 15

something founded on a careful consideration. According to the mood of the moment, a child can easily and instantly be fascinated by certain characters purely for the sake of their appeals, without ever really thinking about whether he can actually become like them or how being them will affect him. So, a child suddenly loses interest in them as soon as their appeals fade.

In Chapter 1-C, I talked about how Nietzsche possesses deeply ‘cinematic’ imagination, and how his ‘cinematic’ imaginations of ‘war’, ‘slavery’ and ‘cultivation’ often get better of him to the extent where he becomes embroiled in an excited affirmation of these ideas. And here, I think, we can make a similar observation in regard to his admiration and fascination for those historical figures. That is, depending on his mood, as soon as he sees in those historical figures certain distinctive characteristics which are particularly interesting or attractive to him, he becomes so deeply gripped by their imaginative appeals, that he can no longer clear-sightedly see them for what they actually are. In his ‘cinematic’ imaginations of his being those historical figures, he cannot clear-sightedly see what it would actually be like to possess those characteristics, what being like those historical figures would actually involve, and whether he would really be able to or really wish to be like those historical figures in reality. So, he often ends up admiring them without at all considering about the full potential implications this admiration would have for both himself and his philosophy as a whole. But, when his mood changes and he decides to give some careful thought to those characteristics, he often comes to realise that many of them are not exactly what he truly longs for, or something that he can actually whole-heartedly affirm and endorse both ‘philosophically’ and ‘personally’: we see this most typically in Nietzsche’s attitude towards Napoleon, as I will illustrate in the next chapter. And it seems to me that, by longing for many different characteristics and yet being unable to commit himself to most of them in his ever-changing moods, Nietzsche was in the end beginning to lose sight of exactly what he really valued and truly longed for. But, nonetheless,

he still continued to pack many different ideas into the conception of 'higher types', so that it inevitably ultimately ended up being something very unstable, obscure, unrealistic and even mythic.

So, in conclusion, I have argued in this chapter that the mature Nietzsche's conception of 'higher types', whose nurturing is his highest concern, is an outcome of his continuous endeavour to find out what exactly constitutes 'greatness' in us moderns. It is essentially an ultimate representation of his idea of 'human greatness' capable of creating cultural greatness and new 'life-affirming' values in the face of the imminent arrival of life-denying 'nihilism', through which he also expresses his idea of 'life-affirmation', what he identifies as the best possible way positively to interpret, justify and accept the existence of suffering, in order to make 'life' as a whole *embraceable*.

And I have also argued that those exceptional historical figures such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon, whom Nietzsche connects to his conception of higher types in his works, are not examples of higher types, but rather 'archetypes' who are purposely idealised by him to represent certain characteristics which he values and thus expects to find in higher types. But then, in Nietzsche's view, higher types are not simply individuals with certain admirable characteristics. Crucially, they are also integrated individuals who possess a unique and exceptional individuality and sensibility, and in whom there ultimately exists an undeniable sense of unity.

Further, I have argued that while Nietzsche in EH describes himself as a higher type, he is not an example of such a type. In fact, Nietzsche in his works provides us with no concrete

example of higher types, because his conception of 'higher types' is neither as solid nor as plausible as some commentators believe. Many of the characteristics which he ascribes to higher types are not just what he as 'a philosopher' values and recognises to be necessary for us modern to become 'great', but also what he as 'a unique individual living a unique life' values and longs to possess. But his longings for certain characteristics often change, because of his ever-changing moods. So, ultimately, he fails to establish a single solid conception of 'higher types', fails to establish a clear and consistent idea of what exactly constitutes 'greatness' in us moderns.

Accordingly, my view is that even if Nietzsche intends to provide an example of a higher type, he in fact *cannot* give us any concrete example of such a type. And though we certainly can understand the nature of higher types to a certain extent from all the relevant comments he makes, his conception of higher types should also be grasped as essentially a product of his various personal fantasies, a fluid compound made up of his ever-changing personal longings and desires for certain characteristics, most which he himself could not acquire.

Chapter 4

‘Nobility’ and ‘Life-affirmation’

As I suggested in Chapter 3, Nietzsche’s conception of ‘higher types’ is closely connected with his conception of ‘nobility’ and his idea of ‘life-affirmation’. However, his discussions of them are often confusing and obscure. In fact, I agree with Hamilton when he suggests that Nietzsche in his works presents – at least – two different conceptions of ‘nobility’ and ‘life-affirmation’, which Hamilton terms a “worldly” and an “inward” conception, without clearly distinguishing one conception from another, and also without properly working out either conception.¹ Accordingly, in this chapter, I investigate these two different conceptions in order to clarify the nature of ‘higher types’ further.

In Section A, as I examine Nietzsche’s ‘worldly’ conception of nobility, I argue that his writings display a strong tension between the desire to endorse what I call the worldly nobles’ way of life, a certain brutal way of life, that, for example, led by people like Napoleon, and the recognition that such a way of life is just not possible in the modern world and also in itself hollow. Then, in Section B, I examine Nietzsche’s idea of ‘worldly’ life-affirmation, which is expressed by his doctrine of ‘the eternal recurrence’. After discussing some interpretive issues concerning ‘the eternal recurrence’, I illustrate several significant problems of the ‘worldly’ life-affirmation. In particular, I point out how the ‘worldly’ life-affirmation can actually become life-denying in certain contexts, and also argue that what one can affirm in the worldly sense is only one’s own life, not ‘life’ in general. Then, in Section C, I examine Nietzsche’s ‘inward’ conception of nobility and life-affirmation, and illustrate how it differs from his ‘worldly’

¹ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 169-170

conception. And I argue that although Nietzsche's 'inward' conception of nobility and life-affirmation can help us see the possibility of a notion of the inward life-affirmation that involves not only an affirmation of one's own life but also an affirmation of 'life' in general, such notion of the inward affirmation of 'life' is something of which we cannot make proper sense within the terms of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Section A: Nobility in a 'worldly' sense

Nietzsche presents a 'worldly' conception of nobility primarily through his genealogical account of 'master morality', which is the first of "two basic types" of morality he claims to have discovered among "the many subtler and coarser moralities which have so far been prevalent on earth, or still are prevalent" (BGE: 260); the second is 'slave morality', typified by Christian morality. In this context, people who possess worldly nobility, "the worldly nobles",² are portrayed as people of the ruling class who exist typically in the ancient hierarchical societies, such as of pre-Socratic Greece.

According to Nietzsche, the worldly nobles are the knightly-aristocratic type of men with a powerful physicality, a strong soul and an overflowing health, who enjoy vigorous activities. They are high-minded individuals, who are exaltedly conscious and proud of these attributes of theirs as well as their high social standing (see GM: I, 2 & 7). The essence of their soul is a certain type of "egoism", namely the "unshakable faith that to a being such as "we are" other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves", which they accept "without any question mark, also without any feeling that it might contain hardness, constraint, or caprice, rather as something that may be founded in the primordial law of things", as if "it is justice itself" (BGE: 265). In this manner, they regard themselves as the "*meaning* and highest justification" of their societies, by believing that "society must *not* exist for society's sake but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which" the noble type of being like themselves "is able to raise itself to its higher task and to a higher state of *being*". Hence, they accept "with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings who . . . must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments" for their sake (see BGE: 258).

² See Hamilton (2000): p. 170. I will continue borrowing the term 'the worldly nobles' hereafter.

Nietzsche argues that among the worldly nobles, whom he also calls ‘the masters’, the moral discrimination of values originates from “the exalted, proud states of the soul” of theirs, from their delightful consciousness of their difference from the ruled (see BGE: 260). Such consciousness is what Nietzsche calls the “*pathos of distance*”, namely “the protracted and domineering fundamental total feeling on the part of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order”, in which the noble men of the higher ruling order feel “themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian” (see GM: I, 2). Hence, in their ‘master morality’, the primal value ‘good’ is conceived by the nobles “spontaneously” out of themselves, and it represents everything they possess and are proud of, such as their distinctive attributes and their social standing as the rulers (see GM: I, 11). And it is only after the positive basic concept ‘good’ is created in such a way that the negative concept ‘bad’ is then established by the nobles in the light of their sense of their own goodness, as the “opposite” of everything they uniquely possess and are proud of, “only so as to affirm” themselves “more gratefully and triumphantly” (see GM: I, 10). Hence, ‘bad’ is merely an afterthought, “a contrasting shade” (GM: I, 11), and it represents anything that is alien to their noble attributes as well as anyone who is not noble, i.e. the ignoble ruled, whom they find “contemptible” (see BGE: 260).

So, the worldly nobles are self-affirmative individuals who do not need to “persuade themselves, *deceive* themselves,” that they are happy, since their absolute self-reverence itself makes them feel themselves to be happy (see GM: I, 10). They are *active* value-creators, who regard themselves as a standard, and who spontaneously posit their own values and ascribe them to themselves from their urge to honour themselves. Hence, their master morality is “self-glorification” (BGE: 260), an expression of their active self-affirmation, which has nothing to do with the “viewpoint of utility” (GM: I, 2).

According to Nietzsche, this worldly nobles' urge to honour themselves is also reflected in their 'actions': "moral designations were everywhere first applied to *human beings* and only later, derivatively, to actions" (BGE: 260). Towards the other worldly nobles who possess equal rights and privileges to its own, the noble soul shows "the same sureness of modesty and delicate reverence that characterize its relation with itself". By exchanging honours and rights with the other nobles mutually, "it honors *itself* in them and in the rights it cedes to them" (see BGE: 265). And through such association, the nobles reconfirm and celebrate their sense of being 'good' to one another. But, on the other hand, against the ignoble ruled, they feel themselves to be allowed to "behave as one pleases or "as the heart desires," and in any case "beyond good and evil"" (see BGE: 260).

Now, what does 'beyond good and evil' mean? Although this phrase appears repeatedly in his works, it is actually ambiguous, since Nietzsche seems to use it in several different ways, often without explaining exactly what he means by it. For instance, at several places, he suggests that being 'beyond good and evil' is about being "no longer . . . under the spell and delusion of morality" (BGE: 56), about leaving "the illusion of moral judgement *beneath* himself" (TI: VII, 1). At different places, he seemingly intends 'beyond good and evil' to mean "beyond one's time", a state in which we "overcome" our time in ourselves and gain "a freedom" from "the sum of the imperious value judgements that have become part of our flesh and blood" (see GS: 380). But, elsewhere, he seemingly equates 'beyond good and evil' with the Hindu and Buddhist type of "the supreme state, *redemption itself*, total hypnotization and repose at last achieved" as an "entry and return into the ground of things, . . . liberation from all illusions, . . . release from all purpose, all desire, all action" (GM: III, 17). Hence, this phrase clearly has several different meanings, and Nietzsche does not properly work out what it actually stands for.

Nevertheless, here, we could plausibly suppose that, in this context of the way the worldly nobles behave, this phrase is intended to mean ‘*not* beyond the realm of master morality with the value-distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, *but* beyond the realm of slave morality with the value-distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’’. For, though he at one point equates ‘beyond good and evil’ with “unmorally, extra-morally” (HAH: I, *Preface*, 1), he claims elsewhere that “At least this [‘beyond good and evil’] does *not* mean “Beyond Good and Bad.”” (GM: I, 17). Hence, what he suggests here is that the worldly nobles consider themselves to be free to behave against the ignoble ruled as they please, in a manner that conforms to the norms of their ‘master morality’ but varies from the norms of ‘slave morality’, such as those of Christian morality. But it must be added that they are not aware of the fact that they behave in such manner. For, according to Nietzsche’s account, at the time of the proto-worldly nobles, slave morality is not yet established by ‘the slaves’ as the ignoble ruled. Moreover, even after slave morality is established, not only do the worldly nobles hardly know its nature, but they also refuse to know it (see GM: I, 10).

So, in this context, Nietzsche talks about how the worldly nobles can “emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a students’ prank” (GM: I, 11). In his view, they can engage in these hideous acts innocently, not simply because of their strength, but, more crucially, because they are not subject to the Christian moralised conceptions such as of ‘sin’ and ‘punishment’, which have traditionally contributed toward preventing people from committing these hideous acts. To the nobles who accept unquestioningly the sacrifice of the ignoble ruled as if “it is justice itself”, these hideous acts against the ignoble ruled are part of their privileges as the rulers, which they delightfully exercise as ‘good’ actions from the “*pathos of distance*” (see BGE: 258 & 265).

In the same context, Nietzsche also claims that “the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power”. In his view, even when the worldly nobles help or pity the ignoble ruled, they still do so ‘beyond good and evil’, since they do not consider the act of helping or pitying to be ‘morally required’ as it is understood in the Christian moral sense. Instead, among the nobles who bear no relation to the Christian moralised conceptions such as of ‘love of one’s neighbours’, the act of pitying is something that done out of “the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give and bestow”, which exist in the foreground of their ‘master morality’ as “self-glorification” (see BGE: 260).

Nietzsche also argues that the worldly nobles are unintelligent individuals who lack inner depths, as their “inner world” is “thin as if it were stretched between two membranes” (GM: II, 16). And because of this lack, whenever they feel an impulse – such as an impulse ‘to harm someone’ –, they cannot stop themselves from translating it into an action immediately, by using their mighty strength and energy. Nietzsche insists that among the strong type of men like the nobles, there is in fact no “being” – no ‘self’ – behind their actions: there exists behind them no such thing as “a neutral substratum”, which is “*free* to express strength or not to do so” (see GM: I, 13). Moreover, Nietzsche adds that the strong type of men like the nobles are also by nature ‘forgetful’, “incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long”, because of their mighty strength and energy (see GM: I, 10).

To that effect, Nietzsche describes the worldly nobles as “men of prey” who possess “unbroken strength of will and lust for power” (BGE: 257). They are essentially barbarous, bold, reckless and fearless, as they can always express their natural instincts of cruelty and aggression freely, fully and delightfully, whenever they feel like it, with total disregard for their own safety

and interests. Hence, they are imprudent and uncalculating individuals who live “in trust and openness” with themselves (see GM: I, 10-11).

In this context, Nietzsche suggests that the worldly nobles are virtually free from experiencing ‘*ressentiment*’. *Ressentiment* is Nietzsche’s term for a reactive, painful psychological state that comprises such emotions as hatred, malice, vengefulness, envy and mean-spiritedness, which arises from the repression and subsequent frustration of one’s instincts, impulses and desires. For instance, one may experience *ressentiment* when one desires to carry out revenge against someone but this desire is frustrated for some reason, such as for one’s physical incompetence. Accordingly, in the case of the worldly nobles, they should have no relation to such a painful psychological state, since every impulse of theirs can always expend itself as soon as it appears: “*Ressentiment* itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*: on the other hand, it fails to appear at all on countless occasions on which it inevitably appears in the weak and impotent” (see GM: I, 10).

So far, I have outlined the nature of the worldly nobles Nietzsche presents in his works. Now, the issue we ought to discuss is how this ‘worldly’ conception of nobility should be understood in relation to his conception of ‘higher types’. For, as I indicated before, one of the key clues for understanding his conception of ‘higher types’ lies with his conception of ‘nobility’, since he regards higher types as people who are ‘noble’. Hence, it seems reasonable to presume that, in Nietzsche’s view, one possible way of becoming a ‘higher type’ is to gain worldly nobility. The question, then, is how we can gain this nobility. For instance, does Nietzsche suggest that, in order to gain worldly nobility, we must go back to being exactly like the worldly nobles he describes? I do not think he is. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that ‘worldly’ nobility is all about the exact return to the worldly nobles.

It seems that there are two fundamental problems with this interpretation. Firstly, the worldly nobles, whom Nietzsche portrays as “triumphant monsters” capable of emerging from hideous acts cheerfully and innocently, are so excessively bestial and cruel, that it is hard to imagine that such beings have actually existed ever or have existed as widely as he suggests (see GM: I, 11). And in fact, notwithstanding the extensive description of the worldly nobles we find in Nietzsche’s works, I agree with Hamilton that Nietzsche actually gives no concrete example of the worldly nobles he describes at all. That is, although Nietzsche claims that examples of the worldly nobles include “the Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, [and] the Scandinavian Vikings” (GM: I, 11), these figures do not actually fit his description of the worldly nobles.³ For instance, the Homeric heroes are certainly strong, healthy, energetic and fundamentally barbarous. Yet, as Simon May remarks, “It is questionable whether . . . the Homeric heroes . . . bear much resemblance to his unreflecting ‘nobles’, with their forgetfulness of insults and inability to take enemies, accidents, or misdeeds seriously”.⁴ Indeed, as Hamilton observes, even Achilles is nothing like the unreflecting worldly nobles who simply act on their impulses and thus do not get poisoned by *ressentiment*, since throughout the greater part of the Iliad he is actually a frustrated figure, who is deeply tormented with *ressentiment* by continuously experiencing the unfulfilled pettiest desires for revenge: just because Agamemnon has stolen his mistress who is his booty from the Trojan War, Achilles gets the sulks, refuses to take part in the battle against Trojans, and instead cunningly keeps plotting ways to wreak havoc on his fellow Greeks while mulling the disservice done to him over persistently in his mind.⁵

³ See Hamilton (2000): p. 174

⁴ May S (1999): p. 52

⁵ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 174-175

And secondly, even if we suppose that the worldly nobles Nietzsche describes really existed, it is hard to see how we moderns could ever go back to being exactly like them. Over the course of history, mankind has acquired such inner depths, that we are now extremely reflecting, prudent and clever creatures. And it is an absurd demand, if Nietzsche is asking us suddenly to become as unreflecting, imprudent and unintelligent as the nobles, by eliminating all our inner depths.⁶

So, Nietzsche's 'worldly' conception of nobility is implausible in some key respects. However, this implausibility might be redeemed if we were to suppose instead, as I have done in the thesis, that Nietzsche's genealogical accounts are essentially 'fictional' narratives, and that the worldly nobles as 'the masters' and other related figures such as 'the slaves' of his genealogical accounts are not necessarily historical individuals who actually existed in specific historical periods, but essentially 'archetypes', which Nietzsche creates as an 'instructive' means to illustrate and express his ideas, or to illuminate those of his and others' inner states which he takes to reveal typical psychological patterns in human beings. More precisely, my suggestion is that, along with those historical figures such as Goethe and Napoleon, the worldly nobles should also be interpreted as one of the 'archetypes' who are purposely idealised or glamorised by him to represent certain characteristics which he values and thus expects to find in 'higher types'. Then, on this basis, we could suggest that, in Nietzsche's view, what enables us to gain 'worldly' nobility is *not* the exact return to the worldly nobles, but rather the acquisition of the characteristics which are symbolised by them.

However, this does not rule out the possibility that, while Nietzsche does not endorse the exact return to the worldly nobles, he still urges us to imitate them closely in some way or other. What I mean by this is that it is possible that the characteristics symbolised by the worldly

⁶ See, e.g., Ridley (1998): p. 133

nobles as ‘an archetype’, which Nietzsche urges us to acquire for the purpose of gaining worldly nobility, are pretty much all those characteristics which we can easily detect from his description of the worldly nobles, such as a powerful physicality, an overflowing health, high-mindedness, a brutal nature, high social standing and so forth, with the exception of some characteristics such as the lack of inner depths. If this is the case, it seems that what Nietzsche endorses is, ultimately, something like the emergence of individuals resembling Machiavelli’s *virtuoso* ‘princes’, powerful rulers qua men of *virtù*, who always think and act essentially as a warrior, and who are – when necessary – willing and able to act cruelly, ruthlessly and immorally, in order to maintain their socio-political power and to obtain honour and glory for themselves.⁷

This kind of interpretation actually seems plausible. For, despite the problems mentioned earlier, there is no doubt that Nietzsche’s writings display a strong fascination for the worldly nobles and their way of life. For instance, let us consider Napoleon, whom Nietzsche undeniably admires and associates with ‘higher types’: as I said, Napoleon is one of the ‘archetypes’ who are idealised by Nietzsche to represent certain characteristics which he expects to find in ‘higher types’.⁸ Even without idealising him, we could plausibly say that Napoleon came close to being a modern embodiment of the worldly nobles’ way of life, resembling the worldly nobles not in every respect but in many key respects. Just like the worldly nobles, he was admirably strong and healthy both in body and soul, an extremely active and energetic man. And though he was far from unintelligent or imprudent – he was in fact very intellectual, clever, cunning and cultured –, he was essentially a ‘man of prey’ with an “unbroken strength of will

⁷ See Machiavelli (1988): Chapter XIV – XVIII. There are commentators who take a view similar to this. See, e.g., Löwith (1991): pp. 261-262

⁸ For writing the rest of this section, I have widely referred to and drawn many ideas from Hamilton (2001), especially Chapter 2-3, 7 & 10.

and lust for power” (BGE: 257), and was capable of being very bold, reckless, fearless and brutal when the occasion demanded. He was a high-minded, self-conceited ruler who revelled in his privilege and claimed great honours. With a firm faith in his abilities and superiority over the masses, he presumably saw his society largely as “the foundation and scaffolding on which” he could build and leave his own great legacy, and he certainly accepted “with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings who . . . must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments” for the sake of his own worldly power and glory (see BGE: 258 & 265).

Indeed, just like the worldly nobles, Napoleon was capable of standing and behaving ‘beyond good and evil’. During his life, he made his way to power and prestige by committing many atrocities, murdering a countless number of people, including women and children.⁹ Whether or to what extent Napoleon took delight in committing those atrocities is unclear. But what is clear is that Napoleon definitely committed them with “undisturbed of soul” (see GM: I, 11). His conscience was hardly ever troubled by them, and he certainly never lost sleep over them.¹⁰ It is evident that his moral sensitivity was far less developed as compared with that of many of us. Hence, compared to us, he was much more capable of seeing and valuing the world in terms of ‘strength and weakness’ as the worldly nobles do, instead of in terms of ‘good and evil’ or ‘right and wrong’ as we generally do. And just like the worldly nobles, he was clearly free from the Christian moralised conceptions such as of ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and ‘sin’. So, he was able to commit those atrocities as a part of his privilege as a ruler, as what was simply

⁹ See, e.g., Bruce (1995): p. 248

¹⁰ According to Cronin, who is a leading biographer of Napoleon, one of the most revealing things about Napoleon was his “ability to sleep at will” under any situation, “even when guns were thundering a few yards away”. On this unique ability, Cronin remarks, “It presupposes great calm. Though his senses were sharp, and he felt things keenly, Napoleon seldom worried, and was hardly ever seriously ruffled” (see Cronin 1986: pp. 227-228).

necessary to secure and maintain his power and prestige, with a clear conscience. All things considered, compared to the most of us, he was clearly far less prone to painful psychological states such as *ressentiment*.

As I said, Nietzsche's writings display an undeniable admiration for the worldly nobles and Napoleon. What, then, are the characteristics common to them, which he values and admires? There are many possible characteristics we could think of. But let us begin with the obvious: 'creativity'. It is a characteristic which Nietzsche values as the chief element of 'human greatness', and undoubtedly attributes to the worldly nobles, as well as to Napoleon, who exerted a huge influence on Europe politically and culturally. Yet, it cannot be 'creativity' per se. For, despite being critical of the slaves throughout his works, he suggests that, in establishing their 'slave morality', the slaves are as much creative as the worldly nobles.

Concerning the origin of slave morality, Nietzsche claims, "The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge" (GM: I, 10). Being oppressed by the masters as the worldly nobles, the slaves seek to avenge themselves on their oppressors. But the slaves are physically weak, and thus do not possess sufficient power actually to carry out a physical revenge as 'the true reaction' against the oppression. And as their hatred and vengefulness against the masters continue to be repressed by their own physical impotence, they eventually experience *ressentiment*. And slave morality first comes into being, when the slaves are prompted by their *ressentiment* to compensate for their failure in the physical revenge with 'an imaginary revenge', namely with an establishment of new values that would place them above their oppressors.

However, being "the violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, who are uncertain of themselves and weary" (BGE: 260), the slaves cannot create their *own* values 'spontaneously' out of

themselves as the worldly nobles can. Hence, they invert the masters' valuations out of their *ressentiment*, in order to establish new values which would devalue the masters. So, they first design the concept 'evil' as the primal value of their slave morality, and it represents what harms them, "*precisely* the "good man" of the other morality, precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, but dyed in another color, interpreted in another fashion, seen in another way by the venomous eye of *ressentiment*" (see GM: I, 11). From this, they then define the concept 'good' as the negation of 'evil', and it represents what is unlike the masters, namely the slaves themselves (see GM: I, 10). And by conceiving new values in this way, the slaves deceive themselves and convince themselves of their goodness and their superiority over the masters: instead of a physical action, they in imagination gratify their vengefulness with "a radical revaluation of their enemies' values", which Nietzsche describes as "an act of the *most spiritual revenge*" (see GM: I, 7). Hence, whereas the way the worldly nobles create their values is *active*, the slaves' value-designation is *reactive* in nature (see GM: I, 10).

And Nietzsche argues that it was precisely because it was in such a way that the powerless slaves conceived values that "man first became *an interesting animal* . . . did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth*" (GM: I, 6). "Human history would be altogether too stupid a thing without the spirit that the impotent have introduced into it" (GM: I, 7), he comments. That is, being under the oppression all the time from which they cannot escape, the slaves are at first constantly prevented from expressing their instincts freely. What happens when one's instincts are forcibly repressed? Nietzsche argues that all instincts which can no longer find any proper outlet in the external world inevitably turn backward on their possessor: "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man". And it is through this '*internalization*' that a man first acquires some depths in his inner world and subsequently develops the so-called "soul", i.e. 'conscience' (see GM: II, 16; see also EH:

GM). So, compared with the unintelligent worldly nobles, the slaves, who constantly acquire inner depths through the ‘*internalization*’, are much “*cleverer*”, prudent and calculating individuals (see GM: I, 10).

In this regard, Nietzsche seems to value the slaves over the worldly nobles. By lacking inner depths, the worldly nobles bear “only a very limited variety of drives within”.¹¹ Hence, the way they actively approach and evaluate life is boringly simple. Such an unrefined *active* creativity founded on inner shallowness, which is capable of producing only a very limited set of values, is something far removed from what we regard as human greatness. By comparison, the way the slaves reactively inquire and evaluate the causes of their suffering in a vigorous manner is much more complex and interesting.¹² Such a profound *reactive* creativity founded on inner depths and a wide variety of drives seem to possess more potentialities for establishing new vast and multifarious values and thus for producing new forms of human greatness – “*pregnant with a future*” (GM: II, 16), as Nietzsche says. And this latter way of conceiving values could also be seen as more relevant to us moderns, since what the slaves have achieved, ‘a radical revaluation of their enemies’ values’, is practically what Nietzsche urges us to do, namely the creation of new set of original values by ‘a revaluation of all values’.

But then, Napoleon was far from unintelligent. And Nietzsche is predominantly critical of the slaves and of slave morality throughout his works. He clearly considers this type of morality, typified by Christian morality, to be specially ‘life-denying’. He believes that such ‘life-denying’ morality is a harmful obstacle to the flourishing of higher types, and that its triumph over the last two millennia or so is the chief cause of the decadence of contemporary ‘life’ and ‘culture’.

¹¹ Richardson (1996): p. 68

¹² See Tanner (2000): pp. 82-83

Taking all these points into consideration, we could plausibly suggest that what Nietzsche values and attributes to both the worldly nobles and Napoleon as ‘archetypes’, and thus to higher types, is not the *active* creativity founded on inner shallowness, but rather the *active* creativity founded on ‘life-affirmation’ that is capable of creating one’s *own* values spontaneously, which he regards as “the characteristic *right of masters*” (see BGE: 261). In other words, one of the key reasons why Nietzsche is attracted to them is that they both have ‘style’ of their own, which he increasingly values almost more than anything in his mature works. He writes in GS,

One thing is needful. – To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste! . . . one thing is needful: that a human should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold (GS: 290).

What Nietzsche proposes in this passage is that we should become artists of our own life – or “the poets of our life” (GS: 299) –, trying to make of ourselves artworks (see HAH: II, i, 174).

And leaving aside many problems we could identify in this passage, such as how exactly one is to judge what counts as strengths and weaknesses in one's character, the basic idea here is that "nothing in what one is should be wasted", which is undoubtedly connected with the mature Nietzsche's persistent desire and programme for showing that 'nothing in one's past should be regretted or treated as waste' (see Chapter 3-C).¹³

In this regard, the worldly nobles seem to fit the bill, not in every respect but in a key respect. For, although they are unreflecting individuals, they are nevertheless *active* value-creators with absolute self-reverence, who regard themselves as a standard, and who spontaneously posit their own values and ascribe them to themselves from their urge to honour themselves. They are extremely life-affirming individuals – since, what they affirm is not just themselves, but also their surrounding world, 'life' as a whole, which allows them to maintain and enjoy their sense of their own goodness –,¹⁴ who affirm even their inner shallowness as a part of their whole goodness: though without much 'long practice and daily work', they attain complete satisfaction with themselves. Hence, we could say that they are ultimately possessors of their own 'style', capable of giving a synthetic unity to their character.

Now, for many commentators, especially those who strive to interpret Nietzsche's philosophy as something compatible with today's liberal and humane moral perspective, the chief cause for concern about Nietzsche's notion of giving 'style' to one's character is the fact that Nietzsche writes, 'Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!'. For, as some commentators point out,¹⁵ this passage indicates that what really interests Nietzsche is not the content of one's character, but rather the way all the individual pieces of one's character fit together in a purely formal sense. It means

¹³ See Hamilton (2001): p. 49; also Tanner (2000): pp. 5 & 45-46

¹⁴ See Richardson (1996): p. 56

¹⁵ See Hamilton (2001): pp. 49-50 & Tanner (2000): pp. 51-52

that even someone whom many consider to be a morally corrupt person with an absolutely abominable character could still be regarded by Nietzsche as having ‘style’. And this is an unpleasant possibility that make those commentators particularly uneasy. So, for instance, to avoid facing this predicament, Nehamas claims, “It is not clear to me whether a consistently and irredeemably vicious person does actually have a character; the sort of agent Aristotle describes as ‘bestial’ probably does not. In some way there is something inherently praiseworthy in having character or style that prevents extreme cases of vice from being praised even in Nietzsche’s formal sense”.¹⁶ But Nehamas’ claim cannot be a correct interpretation of Nietzsche’s view. For I agree with Hamilton that “Nietzsche *did* think that a person could have style and yet be far from being morally praiseworthy in any modern sense”.¹⁷

Indeed, throughout his mature works, Nietzsche also positively talks about several other historical figures who could be, along with Napoleon, regarded as powerful ‘men of prey’ – the ‘good men’ in master morality –, such as Caesar and Cesare Borgia (see BGE: 197 & 200). Certainly, in the eyes of the victims of their oppression, these historical figures were merely vicious criminals: as Nietzsche says, “We would be the last to deny that anyone who met these ‘good men’ only as enemies would know them only as evil enemies.” (GM: I, 16). Yet, the fact is that, for many of us moderns as mere third-party spectators, and for Nietzsche, who sometimes affects to “take a kind of god’s-eye view of the world” and seems to be “wearied by ‘mass man’” in the belief that “a collection of extremely similar people would be as boring and superfluous as one of extremely similar works of art”,¹⁸ these historical ‘men of prey’ are irresistibly unique and interesting. In their extraordinary grandness both in body and soul and their exceptional capacity for achievement and so forth, they are unmistakably magnificent and

¹⁶ Nehamas (1985): p. 193

¹⁷ Hamilton (2001): p. 50

¹⁸ Tanner (2000): p. 95

impressive in so many ways that even today many of us find them fascinating and admirable. Looking at the way they single-mindedly navigated themselves through life and created themselves, we could plausibly say that each of them was an integrated life-affirming individual with an undeniable 'style', in whom a unified single taste ultimately prevailed.

So, does Nietzsche urge us to emulate those historical 'men of prey' to lead the worldly nobles' way of life as they did? Does he suggest that, in order to gain worldly nobility and become higher types, we must become brutal to such an extent that we can commit atrocities without feeling the pricks of conscience? As on many issues, he refuses to make his position completely clear on this. And it seems to me that his attitude is in fact genuinely equivocal. For, in my view, his writings clearly display a strong tension between the desire to endorse the worldly nobles' way of life and the recognition that such a way of life is just not possible in the modern world and also in itself hollow.

Let me start clarifying my view. There are at least two basic problems if Nietzsche is urging us to emulate those historical 'men of prey'. The first problem is that one of the reasons why those men were able to lead the worldly nobles' way of life as successfully as they did is that they possessed all the *physical*, *psychological* and *social* characteristics which make them perfectly fit for such way of life. But the reality is that only a handful of people could possibly possess such characteristics: besides, if everyone possessed such characteristics and started behaving like Napoleon, the whole social world would soon collapse. Certainly, if we consider Nietzsche's insistence on 'selectivity',¹⁹ this may not be a problem. Nietzsche could be simply thinking that anyone who is destined not to be blessed with those characteristics has no chance of gaining worldly nobility.

¹⁹ For instance, in his mature years, Nietzsche often insists upon the selectivity of his works: how they choose their readers, how they can truly be understood only by a few selected readers (see AC: *Preface* & EH: *Preface*, 3-4).

But then, the second problem is that, while Nietzsche suggests that historically the emergence of great men is fundamentally “accidental” and has been rarely influenced by “the environment” or “the age” (see TI: IX, 44), there is no doubt that those historical ‘men of prey’ were able to give style to their character and flourish in the way they did, not simply because of the characteristics they possessed, but also crucially because they were placed in certain favourable socio-political conditions for it. Indeed, even if we possess the same set of characteristics as theirs, it is still highly unlikely that we will be able to flourish in the modern world in the same way as they did, where socio-political conditions are totally different from theirs.

In fact, Nietzsche seems to be aware of this problem, since he writes, “The criminal type is the type of the strong human being under unfavourable circumstances: a strong human being made sick. . . . His *virtues* are ostracized by society . . . It is society, our tame, mediocre, emasculated society, in which a natural human being, who comes from the mountains or from the adventures of the sea necessarily degenerates into a criminal” (TI: IX, 45). So, in his view, there exists in the modern world almost no favourable condition for powerful ‘men of prey’ to flourish through the worldly nobles’ way of life. It seems, then, that for us to flourish in such way, we require some change in socio-political conditions, possibly a return to the old type of hierarchical society which those historical ‘men of prey’ had. However, as I argued in Chapter 1-C, this is an idea Nietzsche ultimately dismisses.

Now, one way we could avoid facing these problems is to suppose instead that what Nietzsche really values in the worldly nobles and the historical ‘men of prey’ is their ‘*psychological*’ or ‘*spiritual*’ characteristics. And this is a popular, and seemingly plausible, approach taken by many commentators. For, in his discussion of the worldly nobles, Nietzsche often places greater emphasis on their *psychological* strength than on their *physical* strength (see

BGE: 257). And his notions of ‘strength’ and ‘health’, which he values and associates with ‘higher types’, are predominantly *psychological* in nature: they are, for instance, ‘strength’ in the sense of “How much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*” (EH: *Preface*, 4), ‘health’ in the sense of “instinctively cho[osing] the *right* means against wretched states” (EH: *Wise*, 2). Moreover, while he regards the strict distinction between *social* classes as what originally enables the worldly nobles to possess the “*pathos of distance*”, and to develop their moral discrimination of values (see BGE: 257), he also talks about how, in their master morality, a basic concept denoting political superiority always necessarily resolves itself into a concept denoting superiority of soul, ‘good’ in the sense of “nobility of soul”, which is a “*typical character trait*” of the worldly nobles: consequently, its value-distinction, the antithesis between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, eventually develops into something that no longer refers to social standing. And he insists that it is such “*typical character traits*”, “nobility of soul”, that concerns him and us (see GM: I, 4-6).

So, though the terms ‘the masters’ and ‘the slaves’ apply to actual *social* classes in the context of his discussion about the origin of different types of morality, Nietzsche also generally intends them to apply to one’s *psychological* characteristics, or, as Simon May puts it, “*manners of thought and being, exemplifiable across a broad range of human activities*”.²⁰ This means that, in Nietzsche’s view, someone belonging to ‘the masters’ in socio-political sense could well be ‘the slaves’ in psychological sense.²¹ Hence, for instance, Nietzsche describes ‘the priests’, another ‘archetype’, as people who are members of high social standing and yet weak and unhealthy both in body and soul: despite being ‘noble’ in socio-political sense, they are not

²⁰ May S (1999): p. 51; see, also, Richardson (1996): pp. 52-58

²¹ See Leiter (2002): p. 201 & Strong (2000): p. 239

worldly nobles, since they lack the ‘nobility of soul’ Nietzsche ascribes to worldly nobility (see GM: I, 6-7).

So, according to this interpretation, what Nietzsche urges us to do is not to emulate the historical ‘men of prey’, but to acquire the *psychological* characteristics symbolised by them and the worldly nobles alike, and that one can gain worldly nobility even if one lacks the *physical* and *social* characteristics these archetypes symbolise. From this, we could further suggest that one also does not need to have the same socio-political conditions as the historical ‘men of prey’ had, nor become as brutal as they were.

That is, in the context of his discussion of worldly nobility, the *psychological* characteristics Nietzsche values and ascribes to the worldly nobles and the historical ‘men of prey’, and thus to ‘higher types’, clearly include a life-affirming nature and psychological health, which are composed of such characteristics as absolute ‘self-reverence’, freedom from ‘*ressentiment*’, and the ability to stand ‘beyond good and evil’ in the sense of being free from Christian moralised conceptions such as of ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and ‘punishment’, which he considers to be a wrong interpretation of suffering. Certainly, it may be true that being a powerful aristocrat in the old type of hierarchical society as these ‘men of prey’ were does make it easier for one to acquire these characteristics. And it is true that these ‘men of prey’ were able to remain far less prone to *ressentiment* than most of us because of their brutality, of their ability to express their aggressive instincts relatively freely, and that all those atrocities they committed were in a sense an expression of their ‘self-reverence’, of their state of being ‘beyond good and evil’ in the above-mentioned sense. But then, there is no reason why one cannot equally become life-affirming and lead a virtually *ressentiment*-free life by being an ordinary member of a modern democratic society: for instance, one’s self-reverence and attitude towards suffering are not ultimately determined by one’s social position or wealth or privilege. And one can certainly

achieve this without becoming brutal or committing an atrocity. For, as Ridley suggests, “there is no conceptual connection between the adoption of a style of valuation which affirms life for what it is, including the suffering in it, and the desire to *increase* the amount of suffering that the world contains (and hence that needs affirming). You could say yes to life, that is, without being then obliged by any logical consideration to go out and burn something down”.²²

This point can be substantiated by the fact that although Nietzsche often declares himself an ‘immoralist’, he never actually encourages people to act immorally. For instance, in D, he explicitly writes, “It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*” (D: 103). So, though he fails to tell us what exactly are the ‘many actions called immoral’, it is nevertheless clear that he does not in any way actively urge us to become brutal and inflict suffering on others.

If anything, Nietzsche is ‘an immoralist’ only towards certain types of morality, as he at no point rejects ‘morality’ per se or denies the existence of values and virtues: he is actually horrified by the imminent arrival of nihilism where no value and virtue impresses people anymore. So, for instance, elsewhere in D, he endorses what he calls ‘the four cardinal virtues’: “*The good four. – Honest* towards ourselves and whoever *else* is a friend to us; *brave* towards the enemy; *magnanimous* towards the defeated; *polite* – always: this is what the four cardinal virtues want us to be” (D: 556). Moreover, although he is critical of the virtues the slave morality cherishes, he does not necessarily criticise them per se. As Ridley suggests, “it is the *attitude* behind them that he deplores, not (always) the virtues themselves”.²³ So, for instance,

²² Ridley (1998): p. 129

²³ Ridley (1998): p. 130

he is critical of the Christian notion of 'pity', partly because he sees it as a dishonest expression of one's weakness and impotence, which is founded on one's inability to affirm life as it is. But he sees nothing wrong with the worldly nobles pitying the unfortunate 'beyond good and evil', since their 'pity' is an honest expression of their strength and power, founded on their self-reverence and life-affirmation. Indeed, Nietzsche explicitly emphasizes that nobility is not about one's "actions", but rather about one's "*faith*", one's self-reverence (see BGE: 287).

Moreover, if we take account of the fact that Nietzsche intends his genealogical accounts to function as 'a polished mirror' in which to assess the condition of our life (see Chapter 2-A), we could suggest that, by portraying the worldly nobles as unimaginably bestial and cruel, he is simply trying to illustrate his view of the fact that our natural aggressive instincts are deeply repressed by our highly-civilised social life, and to make us recognise that the lack of freedom from the constraints of modern society causes us to become poisoned by *ressentiment* far more gravely than we realise.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's glamorization of the 'men of prey' could also be interpreted as a part of his attempt to show how, contrary to Christianity that tries to impose a single 'moral' way of life upon us, there could possibly exist many different, more 'human' ways of flourishing. For, although the worldly nobles' way of life is clearly morally un-praiseworthy and un-virtuous from the Christian perspective, there is no doubt that Napoleon – in one way or another – did flourish through this way of life.

At the same time, Nietzsche's fascination with the 'men of prey' could equally be seen as a part of his attempt to give some positive value to all those egoistic characteristics and emotions such as greed, pride, envy, vanity and lust, which Christianity condemns as 'vices'. For he says at one point that the impulse "to have an ideal of one's own", "to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joy, and rights", which we identify in the 'men of prey', is

essentially “a very undistinguished impulse, related to stubbornness, disobedience, and envy” (GS: 143). And while he never goes so far as to claim that those egoistic characteristics and emotions are simply in themselves ‘good’ and ‘admirable’ and should be encouraged, he clearly regards them not simply as an inevitable and permanent feature of life, but also as essential to much that is good and valuable in life. And indeed, there is no doubt that those egoistic characteristics and emotions, though unpleasant in themselves and often painful to experience, did play an essential role in Napoleon’s relentless pursuit of worldly glory and thus in his great achievements, which many of us can unhesitatingly admire, and that had he not possessed and experienced them he simply could not have flourished in the way he did.

Yet, it is also clear to me from his writings that Nietzsche is often tempted to affirm and endorse the worldly nobles’ way of life: he seriously contemplates the idea of emulating the brutal ‘men of prey’. And I think there are three chief reasons for this.

Firstly, while it seems indeed correct to suggest that what Nietzsche truly values is the *psychological* characteristics of the ‘men of prey’, we cannot ignore his valuation of their *physical* and *social* characteristics, when we take account of the ‘*personal*’ nature of his writings. As I argued, many of the characteristics symbolised by the various archetypes whom Nietzsche relates to ‘higher types’ are not simply what he as ‘a philosopher’ values in connection with his idea of ‘human greatness’, but also what he as ‘a unique individual’ values, desires and fantasies about possessing. In this sense, for Nietzsche, who himself suffers from and wants to overcome the Christian moralised conceptions such as of ‘guilt’ and ‘sin’, the *psychological* health which the ‘men of prey’ symbolise is clearly an object of avid desire. But, on the other hand, for Nietzsche as a man of weak constitution with persistent illness, the overflowing *physical* strength and health which these archetypes symbolise is also clearly something that holds special appeal to him. And likewise, in the light of the strong liking for the

aristocracy which his writings often display, we could also suppose that the high *social* standing which these archetypes symbolise is also an object of his fantasy.

Secondly, as I argued in Chapter 1-B, Nietzsche's texts display an undeniable fascination for violent images. And, as a naturalist, Nietzsche is undoubtedly deeply fascinated by the way the 'men of prey' expose through atrocities their natural aggressive instincts in their purest form. Moreover, if we take account of the fact that Nietzsche often expresses a kind of deeply personal frustration in his writings and suffered persistent illness which forced him to endure throughout his mature years an extremely confined, constrained and inactive life, it seems plausible to suppose that he was also sometimes irrepressibly drawn to this whole free, active and brutal worldly nobles' way of life as a kind of compensatory thought. And one could also suggest that such a compensation is also reflected in his fascination with 'intoxication', which he continues to maintain even after the abandonment of his youthful idea of the Dionysian type of religion.

And finally, what Nietzsche sees in the worldly nobles' way of life is a possible way of overcoming his exceptional sensitivity to human life as a scene of suffering. As I have argued, even after his rejection of Schopenhauer's pessimism, he continues to believe that life will forever possess in its nature the terrible aspects characterised by unavoidable pain and suffering. Despite abandoning his youthful idea of the Dionysian type of religion, he still recognises the plausibility of 'Dionysian wisdom', i.e. the truth about the terrible nature of human life, and continues to believe that the direct recognition of such wisdom, or the sight of the world as it, is simply unbearable, and thus that we must somehow conceal from ourselves the terrible nature of existence as we would otherwise perish (see HAH: I, 33). And many of his mature works can be, in many respects, plausibly read as 'self-therapeutic' books written especially for Nietzsche himself as 'a sufferer', as his personal attempts to identify the best possible way positively to

interpret, justify and accept the fact of the existence of suffering. And his fascination and admiration for those historical figures such as Beethoven and Napoleon is a part of such attempt of his to cope with not just his own suffering but also his awareness of others' suffering, to make 'life' as a whole *embraceable* (see Chapter 2-A, 3-A & 3-C).

And Nietzsche clearly believes that those brutal 'men of prey' hold a possible solution to this awareness. For, what he recognises in these characters is a remarkable hardness that makes them not flinch at anything, even at the sight of others' suffering. And he finds this characteristic extremely appealing, since he sometime thinks, or tries to make himself believe, that others' suffering is something he can actually affirm by being able to bear the sight of it. That is, depending on his mood, he is sometimes tempted to suggest that being completely indifferent to the sufferings of others, or, even finding them 'entertaining' or 'pleasurable' or 'beautiful', is the same as affirming those sufferings: I shall discuss this in the next section.

So, when overwhelmed by the sight of the meaningless surfeit of human suffering, Nietzsche longs to become or fantasises about being like those brutal 'men of prey', whose remarkable hardness enables them to inflict suffering on others and bear the sight of it, or to bear the sight of someone inflicting suffering on others, with absolute equanimity, or even with innocent exhilaration and delight.²⁴ And there is no doubt that both his criticism of pity and contempt for his fellow human beings that we often find in his works are also part of such attempt, to overcome his susceptibility to pity for others: "my humanity does *not* consist in

²⁴ Staten makes a similar observation, writing that "Without the cruel hero, Nietzsche would have to shut himself off entirely from the perception of a universe of suffering that he would not be able to bear. He needs the cruel hero precisely so that he can receive back into himself, *absorb* and *endure* the greatest quantity of sympathetic perception of suffering, and in fact experience it as the ultimate pleasure, the 'feeling above all feelings.'" (Quoted in Ridley 1998: p. 139).

feeling with men how they are, but in *enduring* that I feel with them. My humanity is a constant self-overcoming” (EH: *Wise*, 8).

But then, the problem for Nietzsche is that he was never really capable of committing himself to the worldly nobles’ way of life. One is certainly free to experiment with any belief in one’s head. But to endorse the legitimacy of a belief one eventually has to test that belief in reality. Moreover, it is one thing to fantasise about being like Napoleon, but it is another actually to become like Napoleon. And Nietzsche himself is clearly incapable of becoming like Napoleon, as he is simply by nature far too weak and far too gentle to lead the worldly nobles’ way of life. Certainly, he could steel himself to certain acts of violence, just as Raskolnikoff did: the protagonist of Dostoevsky’s novel Crime and Punishment, a man of weak constitution, who similarly fantasised about being like Napoleon, and actually tried to act like Napoleon by committing murder. But it is obvious that Nietzsche would inevitably go to meet the same fate as Raskolnikoff, who was, unlike Napoleon, consequently tormented day and night by the stings of his conscience for the murders he committed. For what Nietzsche and Raskolnikoff share is not only a make-up almost completely opposite to that of Napoleon’s, which prohibits them from acting like Napoleon satisfactorily, but also a moral sensitivity that is much more highly developed than that of Napoleon, which makes them recognise ultimately how hollow and abominable the worldly nobles’ way of life actually is.

Indeed, normally, Nietzsche recognises that the worldly nobles’ way of life is not only something that cannot be led successfully in the modern world, but also something he cannot endorse wholeheartedly. So, at one point, he describes Napoleon as “the most isolated and late-born man”, i.e. a worldly noble, who appeared in the wrong time at the wrong place, and claims that “in him the problem of the *noble ideal as such* made flesh [was apparent] – one might well ponder *what* kind of problem it is: Napoleon, this synthesis of the *inhuman* and

superhuman” (GM: I, 16). The worldly nobles’ way of life is problematic, because, while he sees in the worldly nobles and Napoleon many characteristics that he values and wishes to attribute to ‘higher types’ – ‘*superhuman*’ characteristics –, he cannot whole-heartedly affirm their brutality, their *inhuman* side. As I said, he never actively urges people to become brutal and inflict suffering on others. And it is clear that, fundamentally, he does not want to encourage a situation where the majority of people have to suffer for the sake of few brutal ‘men of prey’.

In fact, as I suggested in Chapter 2-C, Nietzsche in his mature years also recognises, as he himself now experiences through his illness what it is *really* like to suffer, that the way his youthful idea of an ‘aesthetic’ justification portrays human suffering as ‘entertaining’ or ‘beautiful’ only makes things worse. And on this recognition, he often seems to resolve never to pursue such a type of approach to human suffering any further. So, he writes, “*No image of torture*. – I want to proceed as Raphael did and never paint another image of torture. There are enough sublime things so that one does not have to look for the sublime where it dwells in sisterly association with cruelty; and my ambition also could never find satisfaction if I became a sublime assistant at torture” (GS: 313).

Yet, this resolution is something he can only stick to for short periods of time. For, as I suggested in Chapter 3-C, depending on his mood, in his ‘cinematic’ imagination of his being one of the ‘men of prey’ who could bear or even appreciate the dreadful spectacle of human suffering, he becomes so deeply gripped by its imaginative appeal, that he can no longer clear-sightedly recognise all those problems and thus often ends up admiring and affirming the worldly nobles’ way of life far more intensely than he ought, without giving careful thought to how endorsing it will affect him and his philosophy as a whole.

In such moment of excited affirmation, Nietzsche simply becomes convinced that he is actually capable of leading a worldly nobles' way of life. But, by doing so, he makes the same mistake he has made in his youthful idea of the 'aesthetic' justification. That is, he mistakenly thinks that he can and will become one of the 'men of prey' who inflict suffering on others or watch someone inflicting suffering on others, so that he himself will never be bothered by others' suffering, while forgetting to consider the possibility that he could actually – and, realistically, would most likely – end up being one who has to suffer under the 'men of prey' – one who has to be a part of the spectacle.

In this manner, I suggest, Nietzsche is trapped in and tormented by a dilemma that is caused by his strong inner tension between his urge to affirm and endorse the worldly nobles' way of life and his recognition of the impossibility of leading the worldly nobles' way of life in the modern world as well as the hollowness of such way of life itself. Certainly, throughout his mature works, he attempts to explore various different ways to cope with a suffocating sense of pity that overwhelms him at the sight of suffering humanity. Yet, he never seems to manage to find anything that satisfies him. Indeed, as we will see, because of his stubborn commitment to complete life-affirmation as well as his fundamental contempt for fellow human beings, his options are always very limited.

Section B: Life-affirmation in a 'worldly' sense

As I suggested before, compared with the youthful Nietzsche's idea of life-affirmation that only tries to 'bear' life through the mediation of a metaphysical third-party, what the mature Nietzsche proposes is a more direct form of life-affirmation that tries to '*embrace*' life completely without resorting to any metaphysical mediation. And this new idea of life-affirmation, which he connects to the 'worldly' conception of nobility, what we may call the 'worldly' life-affirmation, is expressed by him through his doctrine of 'the eternal recurrence'. He introduces this doctrine in GS, in the shape of a proclamation by "a demon".

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!" Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and everything, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (GS: 341).

So, the basic idea of the eternal recurrence is that everything recurs eternally in exactly the same way and order in which it happens now.

Now, there was a time when the eternal recurrence was traditionally interpreted as Nietzsche's 'cosmological' theory. And the basic idea of this theory, of what we may call 'the recurrence cosmology',¹ is that not only does everything really recur eternally, but it has also already existed and repeated itself an infinite number of times before in exactly the same way and order (see Z: III, 2, 2 & III, 13, 2). However, like the majority of recent commentators, I find the 'cosmological' interpretation questionable, since 'the recurrence cosmology' is clearly too underdeveloped to be regarded as a cosmology proper. Nietzsche's discussion of what appears to be the recurrence cosmology in his published works is generally abstract and obscure. Further, as some commentators have demonstrated, the proofs of the truth of the recurrence cosmology which he appears to give in the Nachlass are far from logically coherent or convincing.² In fact, his cosmology also seems to be something that is incompatible with the dominant position he displays throughout his mature published works, namely the rejection of 'metaphysics'. For, as Clark points out, those proofs he gives in the Nachlass are what appeal almost exclusively to 'metaphysical' premises, "*a priori* considerations regarding the nature of time, force, necessity, and probability".³

Hence, I interpret the eternal recurrence simply as a 'metaphor' – a purely hypothetical situation – Nietzsche uses primarily to articulate the nature of his idea of worldly life-affirmation, what he sometimes calls the "highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable" (EH: Z, 1). More precisely, my view is that, as many recent commentators argue, his idea of worldly life-affirmation expressed through the eternal recurrence should be regarded as

¹ I am borrowing this term from Clark (1990).

² See, e.g., Danto (2005): pp. 186-191, Simmel (1991): pp. 170ff, Soll (1980): pp. 326ff & Magnus (1978): pp. 75-98

³ See Clark (1990): p. 247

something that is independent of the recurrence cosmology, in the sense that it does not presuppose or appeal for its validity to the truth or plausibility of the cosmology: so that even if everything does not really recur eternally, his idea of the worldly life-affirmation will neither disintegrate nor lose its practical significance and value.

This interpretation seems indeed plausible. For, looking at the above-quoted passage of GS, there is nothing to suggest that the talk of everything recurring is more than a simple matter of ‘what if’. And looking at his published works collectively, it is evident that Nietzsche more often discusses the eternal recurrence in the context of ‘life-affirmation’, especially in the context of a campaign against the imminent arrival of ‘life-denying’ nihilism. And crucially, as many commentators point out, apart from those proofs in the Nachlass, Nietzsche makes no serious or sustained attempt to demonstrate the truth of the recurrence cosmology in any of his published works.

Accordingly, Soll, who describes the demon’s proclamation of the eternal recurrence as “a thought experiment”, seems right when he suggests that such absence of any sustained attempt in the published works indicates that Nietzsche’s primary concern is not the “truth or theoretical content” of the recurrence cosmology, but rather “the psychological consequences of this cosmological theory, in the human import of this world hypothesis”, i.e. “people’s attitudes and reaction to this theory”.⁴ In this sense, as some commentators suggest, Nietzsche also seemingly intends the eternal recurrence to function as a ‘test’ of one’s life-affirmation. By hearing the demon’s proclamation of the recurrence of one’s life, whether one’s reaction is gnashing of teeth in despair or elatedly finding the proclamation divine would indicate how negative or affirmative one’s attitude towards one’s life is.⁵

⁴ See Soll (1980): pp. 322-323

⁵ See Clark (1990): pp. 251-252 & Reginster (2008): p. 202

However, I do not entirely agree with Soll's interpretation, since what he actually claims is that Nietzsche's focus lies on the effect the eternal recurrence would or should have upon those who consider it to be "probable" or at least "possible". According to Soll, in Nietzsche's view, accepting the doctrine of the eternal recurrence would cause our psychology to "be profoundly affected". But such acceptance does not necessarily entail "a belief in the doctrine's truth". Instead, considering the eternal recurrence as "probable" or even as "a mere possibility" could involve important profound psychological consequences, which are at the centre of his interest in the eternal recurrence. And one of the psychological consequences Nietzsche intends the eternal recurrence to have is "to increase our sense of the significance of the choices we make", "enhancing the import of our decisions and actions".⁶

I find Soll's interpretation problematic. Firstly, while Soll is suggesting that Nietzsche intends a belief in the 'possibility' of the eternal recurrence to be what would ultimately cause our attitude towards life to change into the more affirmative attitude that he proposes, this does not seem correct. Certainly, as Soll points out, there is a passage in the Nachlass where Nietzsche claims that even the consideration of the eternal recurrence as 'a mere possibility' is sufficient to affect and transform us profoundly.⁷ And it is true that, in principle, one would be more likely to put Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation expressed by the eternal recurrence into practice if one considered the eternal recurrence to be at least 'possible'. However, in the light of Nietzsche's criticism of the Christian 'teleological' attitude towards life, this manner of driving us to adopt his idea of worldly life-affirmation from a belief in the 'mere possibility' of the eternal recurrence, from a fear that we *might possibly* have to repeat the same pains and failures eternally, does not seem Nietzschean, as it resembles the way Christianity

⁶ See Soll (1980): pp. 322-25, 332-333 & 342

⁷ See Soll (1980) pp. 324-325

urges people to adopt its teaching through the possible threat of Hell. Moreover, this manner also problematically makes Nietzsche's idea of the worldly life-affirmation dependent on the recurrence cosmology, since what provides the motivation for us to adopt his idea here is, ultimately, the *possible* truth of the cosmology.

Secondly, even if we grant that such an approach is compatible with Nietzsche's position, it seems unlikely that the 'mere possibility' of the eternal recurrence *alone* would actually provide sufficient motivation for adopting Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation. At one level, the problem is that, while Soll might be in a sense correct to insist that considering the eternal recurrence to be 'probable' or even 'possible' could involve important profound psychological consequences – I will expand on this shortly –, he does not explain what he means by 'possible'. That is, he does not specify whether 'a mere possibility' is supposed to be 70% possible or 51% or 25% or 1%. And this is a critical failure, for the fact is that, generally speaking, a sheer thought of 'possibility' *alone* is unlikely to transform people unless the 'possibility' is reasonably high. For instance, almost everyone agree that smoking can *possibly* cause fatal lung cancer. I know that if I keep smoking, it could *possibly* kill me. But if I think that the chance of my getting fatal lung cancer from smoking is only 1% possible, it simply will not make me stop smoking.

Further, Soll also fails to address the fact that 'probable' and 'possible' are two different things. For instance, there must be a reasonable number of people who find the existence of Hell 'possible', just as they see no reason why the existence of unicorns should not be 'possible'. Yet, it seems to be the case that most of them will never be persuaded to convert to Christianity by such 'possibility' *alone*, because, above all, they also simply find the existence of Hell itself *highly* 'improbable'. That is, in reality, 'a mere possibility' of *high* 'improbability' *alone* does not seem sufficient to cause people to change their attitude. And given that the eternal

recurrence is also equally as 'possible' and yet highly 'improbable' an idea as the existence of Hell or unicorns, it is indeed unlikely that its 'mere possibility' *alone* can actually drive people into adopting Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation.⁸

In fact, as many commentators, including Soll himself, recognise, the eternal recurrence would turn out to be a matter of indifference even if it were true.⁹ That is, if the recurrence of my life is true, I have already led the same life I now lead an infinite number of times before, and will lead the same life an infinite number of times more. And this entails that each cycle of my recurring life must be completely identical: there must be no qualitative or quantitative differences. So, at any given cycle of my recurring life, I can have no memories of the previous cycles. And this means that there is also no accumulation of sufferings and joys from one cycle to another. That is, given the absence of memory links between cycles, the successive cycles I will lead are not essentially continuous with this present cycle and thus cannot be really regarded as '*mine*' in the relevant sense. And since it is not really '*me*' who will repeat the same sufferings and joys over again in the successive cycles, the recurrence of my life cannot be perceived to increase infinitely the amount of suffering and joy in *my* life. And this seems to make the prospect of the recurrence of one's life a matter of indifference, which prevents it from functioning as 'a test' of one's life-affirmation.

Now, Soll claims that this problem does not undermine the plausibility of his own suggestion: he maintains that, despite this problem, his suggestion is the correct interpretation of Nietzsche's view. And he instead considers this problem to be a reason to reject Nietzsche's view itself, i.e. the view which he attributes to Nietzsche. And while he suggests that the only possible solution is to presuppose the presence of memory links between cycles, to construe the

⁸ See, e.g., Clark (1990): p. 249

⁹ See Magnus (1978): pp. 111-113 & 139ff, Soll (1980): pp. 332ff, Simmel (1991): pp. 173-174 & Clark (1990): pp. 266-268

successive cycles I will lead as a continuation of this present cycle and thus allow an accumulation of sufferings from one cycle to another, he rejects such a construal as “inappropriate”.¹⁰

I agree with Soll that, given that the demon’s proclamation of the eternal recurrence is supposed to provoke violent reactions, the problem in question appears to be Nietzsche’s oversight.¹¹ And it also seems that the only adequate solution is indeed to presuppose the presence of memory links between cycles. However, I do not consider such presupposition to be ‘inappropriate’. For, in my view, the tone and manner in which Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence through the demon’s proclamation actually suggest that the eternal recurrence is something that we ought to grasp uncritically.

That is, we become aware of the problem in question only when we start concerning ourselves with the truth or plausibility of the eternal recurrence seriously. However, purely taken as a metaphor Nietzsche uses to articulate the nature of his idea of worldly life-affirmation, we hardly ever seem really to analyse critically whether the eternal recurrence is true or plausible. Indeed, reading for the first time the passage on how the demon’s proclamation causes gnashing of teeth, most of us would presuppose the presence of memory links between cycles. By doing so, we are certainly misconstruing what the eternal recurrence would actually involve. Yet, this misconstruing does not at all seem to cause us also to misconstrue the nature of Nietzsche’s idea of the worldly life-affirmation itself.

Further, as Clark similarly suggests,¹² it seems possible that whether one takes the eternal recurrence critically or uncritically is a part of the ‘test’ of one’s life-affirmation. Faced with the question ‘would you desire to live exactly the same life you now lead over and over again?’, the

¹⁰ Soll (1980): pp. 340-341

¹¹ But, see Reginster (2008): p. 212

¹² See Clark (1990): pp. 266-270

chances are, most of us would – at least initially – react to it uncritically, presuppose the presence of memory links between cycles, and give an answer on this supposition. By doing so, we are misconstruing what the eternal recurrence would actually involve. Yet, this surely does not prevent our answers from revealing our true attitudes towards our lives, provided that we have answered the question honestly. On the other hand, faced with the same question, one might instead scrutinise critically its truth and plausibility, come to recognise the problem that makes the recurrence of one's life a matter of indifference, and thus refuse to answer the question. But such a refusal seems already an indication of one's negative attitude towards one's life, since it would effectively amount to answering the question in the negative.

And finally, it seems to me that, for one's psychology to be profoundly affected, one might not even need to consider the eternal recurrence 'probable' or 'possible'. For instance, I consider the eternal recurrence completely impossible and improbable. Yet, when I interpret the eternal recurrence uncritically in the way suggested above, and imagine my own life recurring eternally, this imagination, even though I am convinced that what is being imagined here is completely impossible and improbable, still seems to have some profound effects on my psychology, since the sheer thought of my going through over and over again every one of my painful and unpleasant past experiences does cause me great distress, and further it also seems to give me a new perspective on my past, as well as on my present and future – I shall expand this later.

Certainly, how 'profoundly' one would be affected by this kind of imagination depends on one's temperament. And, perhaps, there might be some who have led an extremely pleasant life and do not mind the idea of their individual lives recurring. Yet, surely, even their psychology must be affected in some significant ways when they imagine the recurrence of not just their

own lives but the universe as a whole, in particular, of every human suffering the world history contains.

This point is expressed by Kundera in his novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

If the French Revolution were to recur eternally, French historians would be less proud of Robespierre. But because they deal with something that will not return, the bloody years of the Revolution have turned into mere words, theories, and discussions, have become lighter than feathers, frightening no one. There is an infinite difference between a Robespierre who occurs only once in history and a Robespierre who eternally returns, chopping off French heads. Let us therefore agree that the idea of eternal return implies a perspective from which things appear other than as we know them: they appear without the mitigating circumstance of their transitory nature. This mitigating circumstance prevents us from coming to a verdict. For how can we condemn something that is ephemeral, in transit? In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine.¹³

We are still deeply horrified by such events as Auschwitz and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Yet, presumably, just as today we are not seriously bothered by the persecutions of Christians in ancient Rome, there will eventually come a time when these event become a part of history by which one does not feel burdened or before which one feels no real terror: they become 'lighter than feathers'. And this is possible only because of 'the mitigating circumstance of their transitory nature', of the fact that they are 'something that will not return', 'something that is ephemeral, in transit', which 'occurs only once' and will not repeat itself infinitely.

Kleist clearly seems to have this in mind when he writes in one of his letters,

¹³ Kundera (1985): pp. 3-4

What is *evil*? *Absolutely evil*? . . . – Tell me, who in this world has really done something *evil*? Something which would be evil *for all eternity* – ? And whatever we hear of the story of Nero, and Attila, and Cartouche, of the Huns and the crusades and the Spanish Inquisition this planet nonetheless rolls peacefully through space, spring follows spring and human being live, enjoy themselves and die as before . . .¹⁴

In this world of ours where everything happens only once and nothing will ever return, there essentially exists no such thing as ‘evil *for all eternity*’, ‘*absolutely evil*’. But when we imagine a world where nothing is ‘ephemeral, in transit’, where Auschwitz and the Hiroshima recur infinitely many times, these events come to have a completely different meaning to us, as they change their nature dramatically, transforming themselves into something that never becomes ‘lighter than feathers’. In this imaginative world of eternal recurrence, we are confronted by ‘*absolutely evil*’, which is “a terrifying prospect”.¹⁵

Again, how profoundly one would be distressed by such speculation depends on one’s temperament. And, after all, a product of the imagination is just that, part of the imagination, and Camus may have a point when he writes, “But what are a hundred million deaths? When one has served in a war, one hardly knows what a dead man is, after a while. And since a dead man has no substance unless one has actually seen him dead, a hundred million corpses broadcast through history are no more than a puff of smoke in the imagination”.¹⁶ Even so, it still seems that, unless one is a heartless brute, for anyone who prepares to engage in such reflection in earnest, this confrontation with ‘*absolutely evil*’, no matter how speculative it is, is capable of placing “the greatest weight” (GS: 341) upon his decisions and actions, as it

¹⁴ Quoted from Hamilton (2001): pp. 94-95

¹⁵ See Kundera (1985): p. 4

¹⁶ Camus (1960): p. 92

dramatically deepens his view of 'evil' and 'human suffering' in this life, as well as of the potential implication and significance of the choices he makes in relation to these two.

Nietzsche clearly recognises this type of potential transformative effect that the eternal recurrence would have, since he says, "If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you" (GS: 341). And as we will see, adopting his idea of worldly life-affirmation does seem to involve taking our choices more seriously. However, it is one thing to be made to feel one's sense of the significance of one's own choices increased, but it is another actually to take one's own choices more seriously, and it seems doubtful that this increased sense *alone* could actually provide sufficient motivation for one to adopt Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation. Nietzsche says, 'if this thought gained possession of you'. And while he does not tell us what exactly he means by it, we could say that for an idea really to get hold of you to the extent that 'it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you', you must be truly captured by and absorbed in that idea. But the problem is that most of us would feel that this idea of the eternal recurrence, especially the standard it sets for life-affirmation, is so exaggerated and high that it cannot possibly 'gain possession of' us: further, it is also the case that, in reality, 'what should change us' or 'what ought to change us' does not always necessarily change us. Hence, again, my view is that the eternal recurrence should be interpreted simply as a 'metaphor' Nietzsche uses primarily to articulate the nature of his idea of worldly life-affirmation.

Let us examine the nature of Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation. Looking at the passage of GS quoted earlier, it is clear that, according to this idea, one is only considered to be affirming one's life fully and genuinely if one could and would desire to live exactly the same life one now leads over and over again. So, what he proposes is an unconditional overall type of

life-affirmation, through which one wills and affirms every aspect of one's life, including the terrible aspect characterised by misfortunes, failures, mistakes, sufferings, and so on.

Although Nietzsche in his works does not really connect the eternal recurrence to his conception of worldly nobility in any explicit or direct manner, he clearly attributes the ability to perform this unconditional overall type of life-affirmation to the worldly nobles, especially those of ancient Greece.¹⁷ And in this context, this type of life-affirmation is often described by him as 'the Dionysian' attitude towards life, which he in TI defines as "Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types", "an overflowing feeling of life and strength, where even pain still has the effect of a stimulus" (TI: X, 5). So, according to his idea of worldly life-affirmation, one must be able to not just 'bear' but also willingly '*embrace*' one's suffering as a 'stimulus to life', as the proof of the meaningfulness of one's life. In this sense, Nietzsche intends his idea of worldly life-affirmation to be "the opposite ideal" against the 'life-denying' pessimism embodied by Schopenhauer's philosophy, which regards all those pains and sufferings in life as the proof of the fundamental meaninglessness and worthlessness of life (see BGE: 56).

Nietzsche also clearly sets out his idea of the worldly life-affirmation in opposition to Christianity, as a counter-ideal to the Christian 'ascetic' ideal.¹⁸ As opposed to the Christian '*transcendent*' teleological justification of human existence, in which this life is devalued as a means to the ultimate 'otherworldly' end, what Nietzsche proposes is a '*non-transcendent*' type of life-affirmation that affirms this life purely as an end, without relying on any 'metaphysical' concept or ideal. Moreover, compared to the Christian 'moral' view of life, in which certain

¹⁷ See Hamilton (2000): p. 172

¹⁸ See, e.g., Clark (1990): pp. 252ff

aspects of life are condemned as ‘vices’, what Nietzsche proposes is indeed an ‘overall’ type of life-affirmation that tries to justify every aspect of life as something valuable and affirmable (see WP: 1050).

Nietzsche also discusses the worldly life-affirmation in terms of ‘redemption’.

To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’ – that alone should I call redemption. . . . ‘It was’ – that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy. . . . That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath; ‘that which was’ is the name of the stone he cannot move (Z: II, 20; see also EH: Z, 8).

Now, the problem with this passage is that Nietzsche does not explain what he means by ‘it was’. That is, he does not specify *whose* ‘past’ is in question here: whether it is my own, or that of all those people I personally know and knew, or of every human being who has ever existed. But supposing he means ‘one’s own past’, it is clear that what the worldly life-affirmation is intended to redeem is one’s inability to change one’s own past.¹⁹ If I am unhappy with my present situation, I can will the situation to become different, for instance, by creating an image of the pleasant future towards which I can strive. What about my own past, then? Whenever I reflect upon all those painful misfortunes and regrettable mistakes I have experienced and made so far, I naturally wish my past to be different. Yet, however much I will to change my past, my willing is totally ‘powerless’ against what has already happened. And as I will my past to be different, I am in a sense denying my past. And this powerlessness of mine to change my past,

¹⁹ For writing this part, I have referred to Clark (1990): pp. 257- 260 & 275

against my desire to do so, also generates in me ‘melancholy’, a suffering in the shape of *ressentiment* towards my past.

According to Nietzsche, in response to this ‘melancholy’, various redemptions were invented. But, to get rid of the ‘melancholy’, what these inventors traditionally did was to wreak “revenge” on life. Unable to affirm or change their past, hence, out of their “wrath” – their *ressentiment* – against the irreversible nature of ‘time’, they devalued this life characterised by ‘time’ as a whole by interpreting it as “a punishment”. And through such interpretation, they attained a sense of power over the irreversible nature of ‘time’ and their past as the perceived source of their powerlessness and suffering, which consequently enabled them to overcome their ‘melancholy’ caused by their inability to change their past (see Z: II, 20): as we saw in the previous section, this kind of psychology, this way of compensating one’s powerlessness, is what Nietzsche also recognises to exist behind the establishment of ‘slave morality’.

In contrast to those forms of redemption, what the worldly life-affirmation is intended to achieve is a “reconciliation with time” (Z: II, 20), an overcoming of the ‘melancholy’ without wreaking ‘revenge’ on this life characterised by ‘time’. If I become able to affirm all my past experiences, including those that were and still are painful to me, to the extent of wanting them to recur eternally, if I become able to transform every unpleasant ‘it was’ into ‘thus willed it’, I will have no need to feel the hopeless desire to change my past. And although I will still be practically powerless to change my past, this will no longer generate in me the ‘melancholy’, since I will now cease to perceive the irreversible nature of ‘time’ and my past as a source of my powerlessness and suffering.

Earlier, I discussed how imagining the uncritical model of the eternal recurrence of one’s life, even without believing in its possibility and plausibility, have potential transformative effects. And here, such imagination could have a positive part to play in this psychological or

spiritual '*therapeutic*' transformation, by making me see my past in a new different light. I often regret what I have done and wish my past to be different. But if I imagine the recurrence of my life where I must repeat over and over again exactly the same regrettable mistakes I have made, this imaginative act will make me recognise as clearly as possible that what I have done is done and there is absolutely nothing I can do about those past mistakes, and that to keep regretting them and wishing to rectify them is not just pointless but also only makes my sufferings worse, undermining my psychological health. And this recognition, this new perspective on my past, could potentially liberate me from the torments both of self-remorse I feel towards my past and of my hopeless desire to change my past, enabling me to recover my psychological health by achieving 'reconciliation' with my past.

Further, this act of imagination may also have a potentiality to redeem my future. By re-living my past imaginatively, I may come to realise how awful were some of the ways in which I led my life. And this sheer thought of how awful they were would give me a new positive attitude towards my future, making me determine to try to live differently from now on in order not to let myself make the same mistakes again. In this sense, as many commentators suggest, the eternal recurrence could also function as an imperative for one's future action: 'Live your life in such a manner that you would be willing to live over and over again'. And if we were to follow this faithfully, it might prevent us from making mistakes that could become causes of self-remorse and *ressentiment*.²⁰

So far, I have outlined the nature of the 'worldly' life-affirmation that Nietzsche connects to his 'worldly' conception of nobility. Now, in the previous section, I suggested that Nietzsche in his works actually gives no concrete example of the worldly nobles he describes at all: although he claims that examples of the worldly nobles include "the Roman, Arabian, Germanic,

²⁰ See Danto (2005): p. 194 & Magnus (1978): pp. 73, 111-113 & 142ff

Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, [and] the Scandinavian Vikings” (GM: I, 11), these figures do not actually bear much resemblance to the worldly nobles, whom he describes as completely unreflective individuals who simply act on their impulses and do not get poisoned by *ressentiment*. Here, we seem to encounter the same problem, since it is also doubtful that these figures can be regarded as being capable of affirming their lives in the ‘worldly’ sense as Nietzsche considers them to be. For instance, as we saw, even Achilles is far from being noble in the worldly sense, since throughout the greater part of the *Iliad* he is a frustrated figure, who gets the sulks and becomes deeply tormented with *ressentiment*. In such a frustrated state, Achilles also does not at all appear to be an affirmer of life in the worldly sense. Indeed, as Hamilton observes, “When Patroclus is killed and Achilles wreaks his revenge on Hector by dragging his body around behind his chariot it is evident that he is doing everything but showing that he would be willing to have his life back again as it has been”.²¹

And this also seems to hold true for all those other historical figures whom Nietzsche connects to his conception of ‘higher types’, such as Goethe, Beethoven and Napoleon. For instance, let us consider Beethoven, whose great suffering in his life was his deafness. According to Solomon, contrary to the popular conception that Beethoven suddenly became deaf, Beethoven’s hearing actually deteriorated progressively and unevenly over a long period of time, starting from about 1796. And around the years 1800 and 1801, Beethoven became severely anxious about his deteriorating hearing, which caused him great suffering and anguish.²² Yet, these several years of crisis and anxiety he endured were also “years of extremely high productivity and creative accomplishment”. On this basis, Solomon remarks,

²¹ Hamilton (2000): p. 180

²² See Solomon (2001): pp. 146-154 & 158-159

“One begins to suspect that Beethoven’s crisis and his extraordinary creativity were somehow related, and even that the former may have been the necessary precondition of the latter”.²³

Now, as far as the reading of this account goes, it appears to be the case that Beethoven was ultimately capable of seeing his suffering as ‘a stimulus’. At a certain point, Beethoven somehow managed to “come to terms with his deafness”.²⁴ And by this acceptance, his deafness was no longer the same to him. His deafness became more than mere suffering to him, and he managed to turn it to account, as something that continuously drove him to new creations. In other words, Beethoven clearly seems to have possessed what Nietzsche calls “the *great health*” (GS: 382), *psychological* ‘health’ in the sense of “instinctively cho[osing] the *right* means against wretched states” (EH: *Wise*, 2): a characteristic which Nietzsche ascribes to ‘higher types’.²⁵ In this respect, Solomon’s remark seems plausible. For, in many and significant ways, Beethoven’s greatness was clearly achieved through, or because of, his misfortunes and sufferings. It was his acceptance of his deafness that significantly constituted a crucial part of what makes his music great, and, ironically, had he not become deaf, he would probably not have been able to produce such profound music that moves its listeners so deeply.

However, this does not mean that Beethoven would desire to live over again exactly the same life he has led. For the fact is that it is one thing to be able to accept and use one’s suffering as ‘a stimulus’, but it is another to desire one’s suffering to recur eternally. Certainly, it is probably true to say that Beethoven saw some value in his deafness and, as Solomon remarks, “[u]ltimately . . . turned all his defeats into victories”.²⁶ But then, it still seems wrong to suggest that Beethoven actually preferred a life with deafness to a life without deafness. For,

²³ Solomon (2001): p. 149

²⁴ See Solomon (2001): pp. 161-162

²⁵ See Leiter (2002): p. 123

²⁶ Solomon (2001): pp. 161-162

undoubtedly, despite his remarkably positive attitude towards his sufferings, Beethoven was nevertheless tormented by his deafness in one way or another throughout his life,²⁷ and never actually wanted to become deaf if he did not have to. And in all likelihood, given the choice, Beethoven would always have chosen a life without deafness to recur, because, surely, it is simply human nature to want to reduce one's own sufferings or at least not to will any more suffering than one already has: also, generally speaking, one would not willingly choose to be deaf, even if it meant that one could become a music genius like Beethoven.

Now, this failure of Nietzsche's to mention anyone capable of affirming life in the worldly sense might be defensible. As I argued before, the worldly nobles and those historical figures such as Beethoven and Napoleon who appear in Nietzsche's writings are fundamentally 'archetypes', who are idealised to symbolise certain characteristics which he values and thus expects to find in 'higher types'. And there seems to be no doubt that this ability to affirm life in the worldly sense is one of such distinctive characteristics Nietzsche attributes to 'higher types'.²⁸ He clearly seems to have 'higher types' in mind when he speaks of the worldly life-affirmation being "the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo* – not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle . . ." (BGE: 56). Moreover, he sometimes describes 'higher types' as 'the philosophers of future', and also often insists that the '*Übermensch*' – whom he presumably intends to be a sort of the ultimate type of 'higher types' – has never existed before. On these bases, we could suppose that people who possess the

²⁷ See Solomon (2001): pp. 159, 296 & 348-349

²⁸ See, e.g., Leiter (2002): pp. 119-120 & Thiele (1990): p. 197

ability to affirm life in the worldly sense are still yet to come, and thus that Nietzsche cannot provide any concrete examples of affirmers of life in the worldly sense.

However, even if so, there still seem to be several problems concerning the nature of the worldly life-affirmation itself. Firstly, we could question whether the worldly life-affirmation is really the “highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable” (EH: Z, 1) as Nietzsche claims it to be. At one level, the problem with this idea of an unconditional overall type of life-affirmation is that it could come dangerously close to being an unconditional overall type of resignation, since, as Tanner remarks, “there is not an easily specifiable difference between affirmation and resignation – or rather, one can say that their modality differs but it is hard to know in practice what that comes to”.²⁹ For instance, suppose I am imprisoned for life on a false charge by a cruel twist of fate, and must learn to cope with the life in prison. Now, if I were to affirm everything unconditionally as Nietzsche’s idea of the worldly life-affirmation suggests, it seems that I should just affirm my fate of being falsely imprisoned, simply accept that there is nothing I can do to change it, and willingly love the life in prison. But is this really the most life-affirming attitude? Certainly, this attitude might make the life in prison eventually bearable and ultimately *embraceable*, helping me come to terms with my fate and to not feel *ressentiment* towards it. But then, from a different angle, it could equally be seen as nothing more than just giving up without fighting.³⁰

The question that ought to be asked is; why should I willingly love life in prison if I find it to be purely horrible and hollow? Adorno seems right when he criticises just such unconditional affirmation as life-denying, by arguing that “Love of stone walls and barred windows is the last

²⁹ Tanner (2000): p. 79

³⁰ This is the impression we get when Nietzsche speaks of “*Russian fatalism*” as a cure for anyone who is in a state of *ressentiment* (see EH: *Wise*, 6).

resort of someone who sees and has nothing else to love”.³¹ And surely, confronted by the fate of being falsely imprisoned, it is more natural for me to hate my fate and seek for it to be different, especially when there may be still room to change its course. Indeed, here, instead of adopting the attitude of ‘just accepting my fate’ which the worldly life-affirmation appears to encourage, I could adopt a different attitude, namely, an attitude of ‘accepting my fate *and also* trying to change it’. While accepting the reality of my false imprisonment without bitterness, I could still perfectly well refuse to love the terrible life in prison, and try to find a way to escape from it, or at least to find a way to make it less tormenting for me. And this attitude clearly seems far more life-affirming than just staring affectionately at the barren stone walls around me.

To be sure, Nietzsche may not be saying that we should just love anything we face even if it is as horrible as the life in prison, since, as I mentioned earlier, according to his idea of worldly life-affirmation, we are to affirm our pain and suffering as “a stimulus” (TI: X, 5). However, even so, it still seems that the difference between ‘just accepting’ and ‘accepting *and also* trying to change’ is something which Nietzsche does not address fully and clearly. For, to begin with, it is not clear exactly how and in what sense Nietzsche intends our suffering to become ‘a stimulus’. Throughout his works, he makes similar remarks: “for a typically healthy person . . . , being sick can even become an energetic *stimulus* for life, for living *more*” (EH: *Wise*, 2), “The poison of which weaker natures perish strengthens the strong – nor do they call it poison” (GS: 19), “What does not destroy me, makes me stronger” (TI: I, 8). And while all these passages are manifestations both of his life-long concern to give some positive value to suffering and of his notion of ‘greatness’ as the attitude and ability to use suffering for positive purposes, they are nevertheless very vague, and he never really explains what he means by ‘living *more*’ or

³¹ Adorno (2005): p. 98

‘stronger’. Listening to Beethoven’s piano sonatas, we could certainly say that Beethoven managed to use his deafness as a stimulus for ‘living *more*’, as what drives him further to new creations. Likewise, reading a biography of Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi, we could say that they managed to use their suffering under oppression positively as a stimulus, as what made them ‘stronger’. But these observations are, in a sense, pretty much made with hindsight. And from what Nietzsche says alone, it is hard to know, at least in advance, exactly what ‘living *more*’ or becoming ‘stronger’ would mean for a person who is tormented by, say, the life in prison.

And more fundamentally, whatever Nietzsche meant by ‘a stimulus’, as some commentators observe,³² his idea of worldly life-affirmation does not tell us what *specific* actions we ought to take. We saw earlier how the eternal recurrence might function as an imperative for one’s action: ‘Live your life in such a manner that you would be willing to live over and over again’. But this imperative is so broad, that even if we were to follow it we would not know exactly what to do in a given situation. What Nietzsche’s idea tells us is only that we ought simply to change our attitude, into an unconditional Yes-saying attitude, in order not to deny or feel *ressentiment* toward anything we face or find. And this seems to mean that it does not really matter whether I ‘*just* accept my fate’ or I ‘accept my fate *and also* try to change it’, as long as that consequently makes me free from *ressentiment*.

At another level, the possible life-denying nature of the worldly life-affirmation is brought into relief by the remarks Reginster makes in his response to Soll’s interpretation of the eternal recurrence which I examined earlier.

³² See Tanner (2000): pp. 79-80 & 100-101 & Magnus (1988): pp. 170-173

Soll does not explain why . . . we should take seriously *all* of our choices, or at least more of them than we would if we did not contemplate the prospect of the eternal recurrence. Why, in other words, should we contemplate this prospect in the first place in making our choices? And why may I not allow myself the indulgence of some unconsidered, hasty choices?³³

As I said, the eternal recurrence might function as ‘an imperative’ for one’s action. Suppose I take up this imperative. Thereupon, with each and every singly action I am about to perform, I will always be careful and ask myself first, ‘Is this really an action I can desire to repeat eternally?’. Now, such an utterly cautious way of acting might help me avoid making some potentially regrettable mistakes and thus consequently keep me relatively free from *ressentiment*. But then, it seems questionable whether this manner of being constantly conscious and fearful of possible consequences of my every action to such an extreme would really amount to a genuine love of life.

It is important for us to take our choices seriously and act carefully, for our own sake as well as for the sake of others. But, in the final analysis, unpredictability is an inevitable aspect of life about which we can do nothing. To predict correctly and grasp every possible direct and indirect consequence of our every choice is beyond our ability, and against our will we are bound to make numerous mistakes, no matter how careful we are. But then, much as this unpredictability can make our lives miserable, it is also what makes our lives exciting and wonderful: we are often made to realise how what we initially thought as mistakes can turn out to be correct decisions, can bring many unexpected joys and pleasures to us and others in the end. In this sense, we could say that the essence of living is that we sometimes appreciate this inevitable aspect of life and allow ourselves ‘the indulgence of some unconsidered, hasty choices’, and

³³ Reginster (2008): p. 212

that being constantly conscious and fearful of possible consequences of our every action to excess is simply pointless as well as life-denying.

We can make the same point in another way. As I suggested in Chapter 3-C, one of the things that Nietzsche's mature writings often display is profound fear of being afflicted with a dreadful sense of unredeemable loss. And clearly, the eternal recurrence as 'an imperative' is a countermeasure against such sense of loss, a manifestation of the desire to 'live without waste': by planning everything to be perfect in advance, one removes all potential mistakes and failures from one's life, thereby minimizing or eliminating any 'self-waste'. But then, life is something fundamentally hostile to us, in the sense that it is deeply characterised by unpredictability, contingency and chance. Many aspects of our lives are simply beyond our control. No matter how carefully we plan in advance to limit the impact of life, we will still make regrettable mistakes and experience unredeemable losses that will forever haunt us. And it is not just the hostile nature of life. While we try our hardest to learn from our past mistakes and mistaken forms of behaviours and not to repeat them, the chances are that most of us will not be able to avoid making the exact same mistakes, because doing such is simply our human nature. In this sense, we could say that a genuine love of life is about, at least in part, just getting on with our lives, by accepting that doing things which we will forever regret is unavoidable part of what life is and of what we humans are, and that the obsessive idea of not try to make any mistakes, wanting one's life to be perfect, is not only pointless but also anti-life and anti-human: as Orwell remarks, though in a slightly different context, "The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one *is* sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty . . . , and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals".³⁴

³⁴ Orwell (2000b): p. 463

This point also leads us to the second problem, which is whether Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation is really compatible with his conception of 'higher types'. I have argued that, as a conception, the 'higher types' are an ultimate representation of Nietzsche's idea of 'human greatness'. However, the utterly cautious way of acting that the eternal recurrence seemingly promotes is clearly not just life-denying and anti-human but also very timid, boring and uninspiring. Indeed, for instance, the reason why many of us find someone like Casanova irresistibly fascinating is because he lived his life audaciously with no plan, with no concern or fear for the possible consequences of his actions: he willingly opened himself to life, and fully appreciated the present moment. As Zweig remarks, "Courage that is the keynote of Casanova's art of life; that is his gift of gifts. He does not try to ensure against disaster, but fearlessly risks his life. Among the thousands whose motto is 'safety first', here is one who hazards all, and takes every chance. . . . Thus does his life become diversified, fantastical, kaleidoscopic, as hardly another in many centuries".³⁵

Certainly, it is questionable whether Nietzsche would connect Casanova to 'higher types': while he may find the way Casanova exposed his sexual instincts fascinating, he may not highly value Casanova's cultural achievements. But then, we could still argue that 'human greatness' as Nietzsche understands it does necessarily involve the indulgence of some unconsidered, hasty choices from time to time. Nietzsche cherishes 'creativity' as the chief element of human greatness, as a distinctive characteristic of higher types. And the fact is that, historically, many of the remarkable creations and achievements were often achieved only because there existed people who were brave enough to take risks without hesitation, to act on the spur of the moment without being afraid of possible failures and mistakes: as the old cliché goes, every failure is a stepping stone to success, to greatness, to new creations.

³⁵ Zweig (2008): p. 51

Now, it is possible that Nietzsche does not actually intend the eternal recurrence to be ‘an imperative’ for one’s future action and thus does not endorse the cautious way of acting in question. For, while his writings express the fear of being afflicted with a dreadful sense of unredeemable loss, he also often praises ‘the squandering spirit’, the individuals who ‘squander’ the energies of their spirit carelessly, who do not approach their life in a mercenary spirit with a prudent concern and a petty obsession for the balancing up of good and bad in their life, but embrace their life even if it has not gone just as they wished (see, e.g., GS: 202, TI: IX, 37 & WP: 77).³⁶ So, it is possible that what he is really concerned with is the worldly affirmation of one’s past and present.

However, even if this is the case, it seems that the compatibility between his idea of worldly life-affirmation and his conception of ‘higher types’ is still open to question. In the previous section, I suggested that one of the characteristics Nietzsche attributes to the worldly nobles and thus to ‘higher types’ is the *active* creativity founded on ‘life-affirmation’ that is capable of creating one’s *own* values spontaneously, specifically, the ability to possess a ‘style’ of one’s own, the ability to attain complete satisfaction with oneself and give a synthetic unity to one’s character.³⁷ And the basic idea of his notion of ‘style’, his proposal to make of ourselves artworks, is that ‘nothing in what one is should be wasted’: which is, of course, another countermeasure against that sense of loss which afflicts his writings. And this whole attitude of treating nothing as waste is clearly a core element in his idea of worldly life-affirmation.

³⁶ See Hamilton (2000): p. 182

³⁷ In Chapter 3-B, I spoke of ‘the ability of having ‘style’ of one’s own’, not as one of the distinctive characteristics of higher types, but as the overall quality of higher types. While I still do maintain this view, here, and through the rest of this thesis, purely for the matter of convenience, I will be describing and treating this ability to give ‘style’ to one’s character as one of the distinctive characteristics of higher types.

However, this attempt to attain complete satisfaction with oneself, the exertions to waste nothing, to keep one's experiences within one's control and make full use of them, is an extremely tiresome and tormenting struggle, in that one must constantly apply inner pressure on oneself. In many ways, such a struggle seems to be a lost cause that could only become life-denying and unhealthy. However much we try to live without waste, we are likely to be always haunted by a sense of waste as we feel that we could still get much more out of our lives. And however much we keep trying to create and make ourselves into a 'great' and 'beautiful' artwork with which we can be completely satisfied as if artists who keep adding touches to their works, we are bound eventually to feel shattered and prostrate ourselves before the un-closable chasm between our personal boundless ideals – or desires – and our own limited capacity.

In fact, as Simon May similarly suggests,³⁸ the ability to attain complete satisfaction with oneself, the ability to affirm everything about one's life to the extent of wanting it to recur eternally, does not seem to be a necessary prerequisite for the ability to create cultural greatness and the new 'life-affirming' values that Nietzsche ascribes to the higher types. For instance, as I argued, Beethoven's creative greatness was in many and significant ways achieved through, and constituted by his – eventual – acceptance of his deafness. But this does not mean that he affirmed his deafness in the sense of wanting it to recur eternally. Nor is it likely that he ever affirmed everything about his life. Yet, this apparently did not prevent Beethoven from being a creative genius, from his music being beautiful and life-affirming. In fact, it could plausibly be argued that all those exceptionally creative historical figures whom Nietzsche admires were able to bring something new and beautiful to the world, partly because they were not so well satisfied with their life: it was their dissatisfaction, their desire and will to change themselves and their surrounding world – which was presumably often founded on their egoistic

³⁸ May S (1999): pp. 119-120

characteristics and emotions such as greed, envy and lust – that crucially motivated them to achieve remarkable things.

The third and final problem of the nature of the worldly life-affirmation is expressed by Staten in the following passage.

For each of us to redeem our own relation to our personal past and to the past in general might turn us away from nihilism, give us strength, makes us affirmers of life. But as regards the past in general this affirmation has not been thought through very seriously or in any detail, either by Nietzsche or by those of his interpreters who blithely tell us that “the eternal recurrence signifies my ability to want my life *and the whole world* [emphasis added] to be repeated just as they are.” Here the world appears a spectacle, an awful spectacle perhaps, but still something judged only in relation to the spectator who unilaterally affirms or denies it. But what about the *inwardness* of this world, the subjectivity of each experiencing being which is itself an absolute origin of the world? Might there not be such a thing as terror so overwhelming that the sufferer cannot or will not affirm it, and in that case who can affirm it on his or her behalf?³⁹

In other words, the question is that whether it is actually possible for one to affirm in the worldly sense not just one’s own life but ‘life’ in general – life *simpliciter* or life *überhaupt* –, including all those human sufferings the entire world history contains.

Nietzsche sometimes clearly thinks that it is possible. In the previous section, I discussed Nietzsche’s admiration for the worldly nobles and historical ‘men of prey’ who led the worldly nobles’ way of life. And I argued that one of the reasons why Nietzsche is tempted to affirm the worldly nobles’ way of life is that he sees in their way of life a possible way of overcoming his

³⁹ Staten (1990): pp. 75-76, quoting Nehamas (1985): p. 191

horror of human suffering. What he recognises in these brutal ‘men of prey’ is a remarkable hardness that makes them unaffected by anything the stern reality of the world throws at them, even the sight of others’ suffering. And he finds this characteristic extremely appealing, since he sometimes thinks that others’ suffering is something he can actually affirm by being able to bear, or even appreciate, the sight of it. Depending on his mood, he is tempted to suggest that being completely indifferent to the sufferings of others is the same as affirming those sufferings.

This is largely owing to the fact that, even after abandoning his youthful idea of an ‘aesthetic’ justification, i.e. human existence and all the suffering in the world being justified as an object of the world-artist’s ‘higher joy’, he continues maintaining his hostile attitude against ‘moral’ interpretation of the world (see Chapter 3-A), so that he is still sometimes tempted to adopt an aesthetic view on human suffering. While he increasingly becomes acutely aware of and is generally horrified by the enormity of human suffering that constitutes human history, he continues in certain moods to display a tendency to see human suffering in general as “an aesthetic phenomenon”, as a sort of dreadful magnificent spectacle, trying to convince himself that suffering, including others’ suffering, is in some sense ‘thrilling’ or ‘pleasurable’ or even ‘good’, which makes the suffering itself justifiable, or at least appear justified, and ultimately transforms ‘life’ as a whole into something beautiful, wonderful and thus “*bearable*” in one’s perspective (see GS: 107).

However, Nietzsche seems mistaken here. For I agree with Hamilton that being completely indifferent to the sufferings of others, or even finding them ‘magnificent’ or ‘pleasurable’, is not the same as affirming those sufferings. At one point in GM, Nietzsche attempts to give the impression that the fact that the worldly nobles, who affirm themselves and their action entirely, are not at all concerned about, and even feel delight at, the slaves’ sufferings means that they are also affirming those sufferings. Comparing the worldly nobles to ‘birds of prey’ and the slaves

to ‘lambs’, Nietzsche seemingly claims that the former affirm the latter, because they enjoy eating them: “*we* don’t dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb” (GM: I, 13). But his claim cannot be correct, since the worldly nobles’ indifference to, or their delight at, the slaves’ sufferings can just as readily be thought of as a denial of the slaves’ sufferings as an affirmation of them.⁴⁰

Of course, one is free to adopt an aesthetic view on one’s own existence. I am free to see my individual life, including my own sufferings that it contains, aesthetically as an artwork or a part of an artwork, as something ‘magnificent’ or ‘beautiful’: which is basically what Nietzsche proposes through his notion of ‘style’. And I am also within my rights to bear and affirm my own sufferings through this perspective.

However, it is doubtful whether I am also within my rights to see and affirm others’ suffering through this same perspective. For this perspective is first and foremost irreducibly *first-personal*, and applying such an irreducibly *first-person* perspective of mine to others’ suffering clearly seems to cause me to ignore *second-person* perspectives (see Chapter 2-C). As Nietzsche himself often emphasizes, every form of suffering can have different meanings and effects for different individuals. And hence, by seeing and affirming others’ suffering in the same way I do my own sufferings, I seem to be failing to understand and respect what Staten calls ‘the *inwardness* of this world’, how the others themselves actually see and feel about their own sufferings from their own unique perspectives.

Furthermore, even if it were possible to affirm ‘life’ in general in the worldly sense, and even if one were within one’s rights to do so, we could still wonder why one should affirm it in this particular sense. It is clear that, as in the case of his youthful idea of the ‘aesthetic’ justification, what Nietzsche is basically urging us to do through his idea of the worldly

⁴⁰ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 188-189

life-affirmation is to make a move from the ‘moral’ viewpoint to the viewpoint ‘beyond good and evil’ symbolised by the worldly nobles,⁴¹ to the viewpoint beyond the slave morality typified by the Christian morality, which seemingly amounts to an ‘non-moral aesthetic’ viewpoint in practice. But then, many of us are reluctant to try to affirm all those human sufferings in the ‘worldly’ sense by giving them some ‘non-moral’ meaning. For, as I argued in Chapter 2-C, any type of outlook that regards human suffering in general as ‘thrilling’ or ‘pleasurable’ or ‘good’ is unspeakably cruel, especially in terms of its failure to take into consideration seriously the real weight of human suffering. And likewise, such an outlook becomes particularly irresponsible when it is adopted by those of us who have always been fortunate enough to be a mere spectator in ‘a ringside seat’, living happily and peacefully without ever experiencing for ourselves what it is *really* like to suffer. Moreover, there are surely certain human sufferings which are so purely awful and terrible, certain atrocities that are so completely devoid of any beauty, such as Auschwitz, that not only can we never possibly give any aesthetic meaning to them, but also we should never affirm them in the sense of wanting them to recur eternally.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Clark (1990): pp. 285-286

Section C: Nobility and Life-affirmation in an ‘inward’ sense

Let us examine another conception of nobility and life-affirmation Nietzsche also presents in his works, which Hamilton terms an “inward” conception.¹ A key difference between the worldly conception of nobility and the inward conception of nobility is that whereas the worldly nobles are individuals with no inner depths who lead a virtually *ressentiment*-free life, the nobles in an inward sense are possessors of some inner depths who experience painful psychological states such as *ressentiment*. To understand this difference, we must focus on Nietzsche’s account of how the *pre-moral* conceptions of the ‘bad conscience’ and ‘guilt’ originate and how these conceptions later become *moral* in their nature.

In Chapter 4-A, I discussed Nietzsche’s emphasis on the ‘cleverness’ of the slaves. In his view, when one’s instincts are repressed and can no longer find any suitable outlet in the external world, they turn back to their possessor. And it is through this ‘*internalization*’ that a man first acquires some depths in his inner world and develops the so-called ‘soul’, i.e. ‘conscience’. So, the powerless slaves, who – at first – cannot express their instincts freely under the oppression of the powerful worldly nobles and thus acquire inner depths through ‘*internalization*’, are clever, prudent and calculating individuals (see GM: I, 10 & II, 16; also EH: *GM*).

However, according to Nietzsche, any fixed communal life also inevitably involves the ‘*internalization*’. Within a fixed community, one is compelled by social straitjackets to control one’s aggressive instincts, or else the community would disintegrate. And in Nietzsche’s view, it was the ‘*internalization*’ caused by the establishment of fixed communities that first gave rise to the ‘bad conscience’ in its *pre-moral* form. As a community develops, its members are

¹ See Hamilton (2000)

increasingly forced to repress their aggressive instincts. And when these instincts continue to be denied external discharge, they will start discharging themselves internally. In this way, man begins to experience the *pre-moral* bad conscience (see GM: II, 16 & EH: *GM*).²

Nietzsche argues that what one also experiences as a member of a community is a sense of 'guilt' in its *pre-moral* form. According to him, *pre-moral* 'guilt' originally arose from "the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*" in "the fundamental forms of buying, selling, barter, trade and traffic". In this relation, as a means of providing security for the creditor, the debtor makes a contract with the creditor and pledges that, in the case of a failure to repay the debt, the creditor may confiscate some other possessions of the debtor or the creditor may "inflict every kind of indignity and torture upon the body of the debtor". Hence, even if the debtor fails to repay, the creditor can still compensate his loss with the pleasure of inflicting suffering on the debtor: this is possible because, "To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more: this is a hard saying but an ancient, mighty, human, all-too-human principle". And man experiences *pre-moral* guilt when he breaks the contract as the debtor. Further, this also leads to the idea that there can be an equivalence between suffering and guilt (see GM: II, 4-6).

Nietzsche claims that such a contractual relationship between debtor and creditor was later interpreted further into "the relationship between the present generation and its ancestors". In this relation, the present generation of a tribe believes that "it is only through the sacrifices and accomplishments of the ancestors that the tribe *exists*", and that the prosperity of the tribe depends upon the ancestors who continue existing as "powerful spirits, to accord the tribe new advantages and new strength". With such a conviction, the present generation feels itself in debt

² This view of Nietzsche's on the repressed instincts has today become the standard view, partly thanks to Freud who popularised it in his Civilization and Its Discontents (see Freud 1991: pp. 315ff).

to the ancestors, and at the same time also feels that it “has to pay them back with sacrifices and accomplishments”. And this sense of “guilty indebtedness” towards the ancestors, which largely depends upon “*fear*” of the ancestors and their power, does not vanish but instead increases as the tribe itself thrives. And when such *pre-moral* guilty indebtedness increases to a certain level, those ancestors are ultimately “transfigured” into “gods” in the present generation’s perspective (see GM: II, 19-20).

The conceptions of the bad conscience and guilt which originate in the above-discussed ways are *pre-moral* in their nature. But now, according to Nietzsche, at a certain point in history, there occurred what he calls the “pushing back” of the conception of guilt into the bad conscience, the process which he explicitly refers to as a “moralization” (see GM: II, 21). Being caused by the forcible repression of one’s aggressive instincts, the *pre-moral* bad conscience is a “will to self-tormenting”, an expression of self-cruelty (see GM: II, 22). Though it has a positive aspect, namely as what has given man inner depths and the capacities for self-reflection and self-formation, it is still a suffering that involves painful feelings of intense frustration and torment (see GM: II, 16 & 18-19). And the ‘pushing back’ of guilt into the bad conscience happens when people, who are subject to a *pre-moral* guilt, interpret those feelings of frustration and torment generated by the *pre-moral* bad conscience as the “punishment” of god, specifically of a specific type of God typified by “the Christian God”.³ They believe that the

³ Nietzsche’s remarks on the ‘moralization’ of ‘guilt’ and ‘bad conscience’ are often confusing. Hence, there exist many various interpretations of the ‘moralization’. However, these interpretations can be roughly categorised into two groups. Firstly, there are those commentators, such as Risse (2001), who understands that the ‘moralization’ occurs only through the impact of Christianity. And secondly, there are those commentators, such as Ridley (1998), who understand that Christianity plays no role in the ‘moralization’. I agree with the former group. My view is that the ‘moralization’ only happens when the *pre-moral* conceptions of guilt and the bad conscience are connected to not just any conception of god(s), but specifically to a specific conception of God, typified by the Christian conception of God whom Nietzsche describes as “the maximum god attained so far” (GM: II, 20).

reason why they are suffering, feeling frustrated and tormented, is because they are guilty before God, i.e. having unpaid debts to God. And it is through such interpretation of suffering that the conceptions of the bad conscience and guilt become *moral* in their nature (see GM: II, 20-22).

What exactly, according to Nietzsche, are guilt and the bad conscience in their *moral* form? As Hamilton summarises, *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience are “forms of suffering which provide meaning to the subject’s life and are thus desired by the subject for this very reason”⁴ To see how this is so, we must focus on a character called ‘the ascetic priest’, whom Nietzsche here introduces as the instigator of the ‘moralization’. The nature of the priest will be discussed in Chapter 5-A. But, to give a brief account concerning the role of the priest in the ‘moralization’, Nietzsche argues that “if one wanted to express the value of the priestly existence in the briefest formula it would be: the priest *alters the direction of ressentiment*” (GM: III, 15).

In Nietzsche’s view, whenever one experiences suffering, one commonly thinks that someone or other must be to blame for it, and this kind of reasoning generates in one ‘*ressentiment*’: Nietzsche’s term for a reactive, painful psychological state that comprises such feelings as hatred, malice, vengefulness, envy and mean-spiritedness, which he considers to be characteristic of slave morality. And from such reasoning, every sufferer seeks someone to blame for his suffering, a “*guilty agent*” who is responsible for his suffering. But another reason why sufferers seek the ‘*guilty agent*’ is that they naturally desire relief from their suffering, and that the most effective means of *deadening* their suffering is “an orgy of feeling”, that is, a venting of their *ressentiment* upon some living thing on some pretext or other, either actually or in effigy: such venting can drive their suffering out of their consciousness at least momentarily. And in fact, until they find the ‘*guilty agent*’, their *ressentiment* constantly accumulates, which

⁴ Hamilton (2000): p. 177

would cause them to suffer more (see GM: III, 15, 19 & 20). So, it is owing to this that Nietzsche insists that the real problem concerning suffering is not suffering per se, but the “meaninglessness” of suffering. Suffering becomes particularly unbearable when people cannot figure out why they suffer, because unless they identify whom to blame for their suffering, which is one possible way of giving meaning to their suffering, they cannot discharge their *ressentiment* and thus cannot win relief from their suffering. And when their suffering remains meaningless and unrelieved, it would become too unbearable and ultimately drive them into “suicidal nihilism” (see GM: II, 7 & III, 28).

According to Nietzsche, the ascetic priest persuades such *ressentiment*-afflicted people, who suffer from the feelings of frustration and torment generated by the *pre-moral* bad conscience and seek a ‘*guilty agent*’, that nobody but they themselves are responsible for their own suffering: they alone are to blame for their being frustrated and tormented (see GM: III, 15). More concretely, the priest first invents a whole range of Christian theological conceptions, such as “*eternal punishment*”, “*original sin*”, and “*God*” as the creditor who “*makes payment to himself*” on behalf of mankind as his debtor “*out of love*” (GM: II, 21). And then, with these conceptions in his hand, the priest explains to those tormented and frustrated people, who are already familiar with a *pre-moral* guilty indebtedness towards the ancestors qua gods, that they are being eternally punished by God, which is purely the result of their being intrinsically ‘*guilty*’ before God, as well as of their having “*the irredeemable debt*” to God who “*sacrifices himself for the guilt of mankind*”: their total inadequacy before God, or in Christian terms their “*sin*”, is the only cause of their suffering (see GM: II, 20-21 & III, 20). And through such persuasion, the priest gives these sufferers an easily accessible ‘*guilty agent*’ upon whom to vent their *ressentiment*, namely the sufferers themselves: the priest urges them to discharge their

ressentiment inwardly instead of outwardly, thereby *altering the direction of ressentiment* (see GM: III, 15).

As Nietzsche describes the “genius” of the priest as “the *alleviation* of suffering” (GM: III, 17), the priest, by producing ‘an orgy of feeling’ in such way, does allow people to find their suffering bearable, and also stops their *ressentiment* from accumulating to the point of suicidal nihilism. Yet Nietzsche argues that this priestly interpretation of suffering, by which the bad conscience and guilt are moralized, does not truly help the sufferers: in fact, he sees it as a wrong and unhealthy interpretation of suffering that undermines people’s psychological health (see GM: III, 17 & 20). For, while alleviating their suffering temporarily, the priestly interpretation also causes them to experience “deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering”, in the shape of the *moral* bad conscience and *moral* guilt (see GM: III, 28). Here, by making the sufferers themselves the object of their *ressentiment*, the priest is deepening the hold of *ressentiment* in the sufferers. At the same time, the priest is exploiting and transforming their *pre-moral* guilty indebtedness towards the ancestors qua gods, which is a mere sense of reverence and appreciation for a god that can be expressed by such things as the offerings of sacrifices, into a profound, relentless sense of inadequacy before God, which – unlike the former – promotes a strong feeling of self-condemnation. And further, the priest is also intensifying their bad conscience as will to self-torture, causing it to take root more firmly in the sufferers. And this combination of the deepened *ressentiment*, the relentless sense of *moral* guilt and the intensified *moral* bad consciousness generates in the sufferers an additional, much more persistent and life-harming ‘intensional’ suffering (see GM: II, 20-22, III, 20 & 28). Hence, Nietzsche says that the priest “stills the pain of the wound [as] *he at the same time infects the wound*” (GM: III, 15). Yet, since this additional suffering is not meaningless, it is not only bearable but also desirable for the sufferers: in fact, it is so desirable that they come to take

pleasure in experiencing it (see GM: III, 11). And in Nietzsche's view, this is something that can only be life-denying.

Now, in Chapter 4-A, we saw how Nietzsche describes the worldly nobles as barbarous 'men of prey' with no inner depths who lead a virtually *ressentiment*-free life. The worldly nobles can always express their natural aggressive instincts freely and fully. Hence, they are practically free from experiencing the '*internalization*', which makes them unintelligent, as well as forgetful in the sense of being "incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long" (GM: I, 10). At the same time, because of this lack of inner depths, whenever they feel an impulse, they cannot stop themselves from translating it into an action immediately with total disregard for their own safety and interests, which makes them bold, reckless, imprudent and uncalculating. And all these characteristics of theirs allow them to be virtually free of *ressentiment*. And looking at such a description, we could reasonably presume that Nietzsche also considers the worldly nobles to be immune from the bad conscience and guilt.

But now, one of the key factors that make Nietzsche's idea of 'nobility' perplexing is that, along with this conception of the nobles who are inwardly empty, Nietzsche also seemingly presents in his works a different conception of the nobles, the nobles who possess some inner depths. That is, if we carefully examine Nietzsche's discussion on the origins of *pre-moral* conception of guilt, it actually appears that Nietzsche intends the nobles to experience *pre-moral* guilt. For instance, regarding the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor from which *pre-moral* guilt originates, Nietzsche claims that it is "the oldest and most primitive personal relationship" (GM: II, 8), the relationship which is present "everywhere and from early times" (GM: II, 5). Moreover, as we saw, Nietzsche claims that such a contractual relationship later generates the sense of guilty indebtedness towards the ancestors, and that this sense

increases as a community itself thrives. When we consider these claims with the facts that Nietzsche portrays the nobles as men of the ruling class belonging to prosperous communities, and that he talks about how the nobles display profound reverence and obedience towards their ancestors (see BGE: 260, GM: I, 11 & HAH: I, 96), we could plausibly suggest that the nobles are subject to the ever-increasing *pre-moral* ‘guilt’.⁵

And secondly, Nietzsche also sometimes appears to suggest that even the nobles cannot always express their instincts and impulses freely and thus become subject to the *pre-moral* bad conscience. For instance, in BGE, he talks about how the nobles mutually exchange reverences and rights among each other in their communities, and how such mutual relation involves “refinement and self-limitation” (see BGE: 265). To that effect, he describes the noble man as someone “who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness” (BGE: 260). Moreover, in GM, when discussing how the nobles engage in hideous acts outside their own community, Nietzsche describes such rampaging nobles as “not much better than uncaged beasts of prey”, and remarks that “There they savour a freedom from all social constraints, they compensate themselves in the wilderness for the tension engendered by protracted confinement and enclosure within the peace of society, they go *back* to the innocent conscience of the beast of prey” (see GM: I, 11). From all these remarks, it seems clear that Nietzsche intends the nobles to be subject to the *pre-moral* ‘bad conscience’ at least inside their communities. That is, though it was originally “not in *them* that the “bad conscience” developed” (GM: II, 17), the

⁵ But it must be noted that the *pre-moral* ‘guilt’ the nobles feel towards their ancestors and gods is actually not the one based on ‘fear’ of which Nietzsche spoke earlier. For, as we will see in Chapter 5-A, according to Nietzsche, among the nobles, in their relation to god[s], ‘fear’ was replaced by “piety” (GM: 19). This, however, does not affect the point I am making, since Nietzsche makes it clear that the nobles experience an enormous sense of indebtedness towards their ancestors and gods, in proportion to the prosperity of their communities.

nobles nevertheless came to experience the *pre-moral* bad conscience at a certain point in time, as even they had eventually, against their will, to submit themselves to various social straitjackets and learn to constrain their instincts and impulses (see GM: III, 9).

So Nietzsche clearly presents a conception of the nobles who are not inwardly empty. For, as we saw, if those nobles do experience *pre-moral* guilt and the *pre-moral* bad conscience, it means that they must possess some inner depths.

What about guilt and the bad conscience in their *moral* form, then? As we saw, the ‘moralization’ of guilt and the bad conscience happens when people, who are subject to a *pre-moral* guilt, interpret the feeling of frustration and torment generated by the *pre-moral* bad conscience as the punishment of the Christian God. This means that, in principle, the nobles we are discussing could well become subject to *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience.

Nietzsche at no point claims explicitly that the nobles experience *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience. However, looking at his texts, we have reason to believe that they do.

Firstly, although Nietzsche claims that “*Ressentiment* itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*” (GM, I, 10), such a claim clearly does not apply to the nobles in question. For one thing, the nobles who submit themselves to social straitjackets cannot always express their instincts freely and fully or translate their impulses into actions immediately. And as some of their instincts and impulses and desires must be frustrated and remain unfulfilled for the sake of the stability of their communities, they are likely to experience *ressentiment*. Certainly, it is possible that their frustrations might not become, as it were, intense enough to develop into *ressentiment* at first. For, as we saw, the nobles can compensate their frustrations by engaging in hideous acts outside their own community. So, it could be suggested that even if the nobles experience *ressentiment* inside their community, their *ressentiment* might not become fester long enough to ‘*poison*’

them at first.⁶ However, Nietzsche also talks about how the nobles, who have been in a constant fight with their neighbours, would eventually come to face a situation where “there are no longer any enemies among one’s neighbours” (see BGE: 262; also GM: II, 16). Such a remark suggests that, through the eventual lack of external enemies, the nobles would ultimately become unable to release their frustrations by going outside. And this implies that they would come to be afflicted with *ressentiment*, and would also come to acquire greater inner depths that would be sufficient enough to drive them to start evaluating their unpleasant conditions and seeking a ‘*guilty agent*’.

Secondly, according to Nietzsche, the ‘men of *ressentiment*’, by that he means people whose psychological – spiritual – traits are predominantly slavish, are far “*cleverer*” than the nobles: unlike the nobles, they are prudent and calculating individuals (see GM: I, 10; also Chapter 4-A). And, as we will see in Chapter 5-A, such ‘men of *ressentiment*’ include not just ‘the slaves’ but also ‘the priests’. Moreover, in GM Nietzsche talks about how the priest “has ruined psychical health” (GM: III, 22), how “everything healthy necessarily grows sick” in the presence of the priest (GM: III, 15). In the light of these, it seems plausible to suggest that the highly clever and calculating priest finds no difficulty in persuading the nobles, who are afflicted with *ressentiment* and seeking a ‘*guilty agent*’, to blame themselves for their frustrations, and that the nobles ultimately fall victim to the unhealthy priestly interpretation of suffering.⁷

And finally, as we saw in Chapter 4-A, although Nietzsche claims that examples of the nobles include “the Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, [and] the Scandinavian Vikings” (GM: I, 11), these figures do not bear much resemblance to the worldly nobles who lead a virtually *ressentiment*-free life. For even Achilles gets poisoned by

⁶ See Ridley (1998): p. 22

⁷ See Hamilton (2000): p. 180 & Leiter (2002): p. 218

ressentiment as he experiences the unfulfilled pettiest desires for revenge and indulges himself in self-pity. Yet, Nietzsche considers Achilles to be noble.

If we take all those points into consideration, we could plausibly conclude that Nietzsche is suggesting that the nobles do experience *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience, as well as those painful psychological states such as *ressentiment*. In other words, Nietzsche is actually suggesting that, along with the worldly conception of nobility that is marked by the complete freedom from the types of feelings characteristic of slave morality, such as *ressentiment*, vengefulness, envy, mean-spiritedness, self-pity and guilt, there is also a form of nobility which is not exclusive of these slavish types of feelings.⁸

How are we to understand this conception of nobility of Nietzsche's, and his related idea of life-affirmation, which Hamilton calls the 'inward' conception of nobility and life-affirmation? Let me first outline Hamilton's interpretation of it, and then I shall expand it in my fashion.

In Hamilton's view, the seeds of the inward conception of nobility and life-affirmation are found in Achilles. We saw earlier in this chapter how Achilles is neither noble nor an affirmer of life in the worldly sense. Throughout the greater part of the *Iliad*, he is deeply tormented with *ressentiment* as he experiences the unfulfilled pettiest desire for revenge and indulges himself in self-pity, all because Agamemnon has stolen his booty from the Trojan War. And when he wreaks his revenge on Hector for Patroclus' death, by dragging Hector's body around behind his chariot, he does not at all appear to be affirming his life in the sense of wanting to have his life back again as it has been: he is clearly feeling profound regret at what has happened. Yet, Hamilton suggests, there is a point at which Achilles shows his true nobility and life-affirmation. It happens towards the end of the *Iliad* where he finally starts to emerge from his self-absorption when Priam comes to ransom his son's – Hector's – body. As he is moved by Priam's plight, he

⁸ See Hamilton (2000): p. 180

starts to overcome his *ressentiment* and becomes capable of being more reconciled to Agamemnon's ill-treatment of him and Patroclus' death than at any other point in the *Iliad*. And it is here in "the ability to *overcome* the elements of slavish morality in oneself", as displayed by this particular Achilles who conquers his vengefulness, envy and self-pity and finally starts to accept his past, that we can find the inward conception of nobility and life-affirmation: a notion of nobility and life-affirmation "which is true to Nietzsche's aims but which breaks with these notions in a purely worldly sense". In other words, there can be "a nobility and an affirmation which is consistent with the patterns of moral emotions Nietzsche so deeply dislikes when we see that these emotions are *overcome* by the person who experiences them".⁹

As we saw in the previous section, according to Nietzsche's idea of worldly life-affirmation, one is only considered to be affirming one's life genuinely if one could and would desire to live exactly the same life one now leads over again. But now, compared with this, Hamilton suggests, someone who affirms his life in the inward sense "would not, if offered the opportunity, want his life to recur with all its pain and suffering in preference to a similar life in which there was less pain and suffering". Yet, for all that, this 'inward' life-affirmer genuinely affirms his life, since his affirmation of life, the love of life he possesses, is one that "does not involve his weighing up the good and bad in it to arrive at an overall conception of, or balanced judgement on, its worth". Such love of life is what is developed from a particular attitude one commonly holds towards one's past. Many people can usually cherish their individual past and find it to be something important to them even when it has contained some pain, suffering and disappointment, because of "the sheer fact of its being *their* past": to each of them, his past is "a unique possession, something which he has truly to call his own in a world where everything else either is or readily seems merely common property – or, at any rate, could easily become

⁹ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 180-181

so". And this love of life, which underlies Nietzsche's 'inward' conception of nobility and life-affirmation, is a result of such an affection and warmth one feels towards one's past both being deepened and being extended to one's present, so that one can affirm all of one's past sufferings, including those that are the severest and the gravest, as well as one's present sufferings.¹⁰

Hamilton suggests that, when faced with the question 'would you like your life over again with all of its pain and suffering or with less pain and suffering?', the inward life-affirmer with this love of life will undoubtedly and happily say that, if he had the chance, he would prefer having his life over again with fewer pains and sufferings or even without them at all. But what demonstrates his affirmation of his life, what attests to the genuineness of his love of life in spite of this preference of his, will be his ability to dismiss such a possibility of his having his life over again with less pain and suffering as "idle fantasy". He will recognise his inability to change his past as clearly as humanly possible, and on this recognition he will not waste his time in wishing things had been otherwise or having regrets about them. Instead, he will seek to get on with his life as it is, with its past as it is, and try his best to turn that past to account in the present and for the future. And as to his present sufferings, while he will seek to avoid them or to extricate himself from them, if that comes to nothing, he will then seek to draw on his spiritual resources to accept them with as little resentment and bitterness as he can.¹¹

So, the inward conception of nobility is "an understanding of nobility according to which we find someone noble if he can affirm or love life without becoming bitter and resentful even if things do not go for him in a worldly sense in the way he wants".¹² And it is precisely such a "*quality of his spirit*" in his response to misfortunes and sorrows, the spirit of his acceptance of

¹⁰ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 181-183

¹¹ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 183-184

¹² Hamilton (2000): p. 186

his past and present sufferings with “an equanimity or, to use Nietzsche’s term, a freedom of spirit”, that makes his love of life “not a balancing up of good and ill in it in order to come to a judicious or balanced judgement on its worth”.¹³

Now, traditionally, this ‘inward’ conception of nobility and life-affirmation has been often unnoticed or unaddressed by commentators. Presumably, this is owing to the fact that Nietzsche rarely emphasises it in an explicit manner in his works, as he does not clearly distinguish it from the worldly conception of nobility. However, Hamilton’s interpretation of it seems to me correct on several grounds.

To begin with, this ‘inward’ conception of nobility and life-affirmation is clearly true to Nietzsche’s aims. For instance, the inward life-affirmer’s attempt to turn his past pains and sufferings to account in the present and for the future is compatible both with Nietzsche’s concern to give some positive value to suffering and with his notion of ‘greatness’ as the attitude and ability to use suffering for positive purposes. Moreover, ‘the ability to *overcome* the elements of slavish morality in oneself’ that characterises the inward life-affirmation is also compatible with Nietzsche’s concerns for the individual psychological ‘health’, especially in relation to the way people interpret the existence of suffering: as I have suggested, one of Nietzsche’s aims is to make us realise how our psychological health is undermined by our acceptance of a wrong interpretation of the existence of suffering, namely the Christian moral justification of human existence – the priestly interpretation of suffering – that includes the Christian moralised conceptions such as ‘guilt’. And as I indicated in Chapter 3-C, this ability is clearly what Nietzsche himself sought to acquire. Indeed, in EH, Nietzsche tells us that the reason why he knows so much about *ressentiment*, and why he is so hostile to it, is because he

¹³ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 183-184

had been himself subject to it, owing to his persistent illness. And he emphasizes how seriously his philosophy has pursued “the fight against vengefulness and rancor” (see EH: *Wise*, 6).

Likewise, as I also suggested in Chapter 3-C, the love of life that does not involve the weighing up of good and bad in it to arrive at a balanced judgement on its worth, which underlies the inward conception of life-affirmation, is also something Nietzsche himself aspired to acquire. His life was full of pains, misfortunes and disappointments. In many ways, his life was a failure in a worldly sense. So, throughout his mature life, he sought to affirm and be grateful to his whole life in a way that is not dependent upon how well things have gone in it on balance in a worldly sense. In this context, he talks about his ‘*amor fati*’, his desire to love everything in his life – even all those ‘bad’ things in it – equally as what was ‘necessary’ (see EH: *Clever*, 10 & CW, 4). And also in this connection, he often admires ‘the squandering spirit’, the individuals who ‘squander’ the energies of their spirit carelessly, who do not approach their life in a mercenary spirit with a prudent concern and a petty obsession for the balancing up of good and bad in their life, but embrace their life even if it has not gone just as they wished (see, e.g., GS: 202, TI: IX, 37 & WP: 77).¹⁴ Indeed, for him, such a mercenary attitude to life can only evince a smallness of spirit:¹⁵ as he remarks in TI, “If we possess our *why* of life we can put up with almost any *how*; man does not strive after happiness” (TI; I, 12).

Furthermore, as Hamilton points out, we can also see how Nietzsche is working with this inward conception of life-affirmation from his treatments of certain historical figures in his works. For instance, while criticising Christianity as life-denying, Nietzsche often shows positive attitude towards Jesus: he effectively separates Jesus from what he perceives to be the life-denying ‘historical’ Christianity created by Saint Paul. In fact, Nietzsche regards Jesus as an

¹⁴ See Hamilton (2000): p. 182

¹⁵ See Hamilton (2000): p. 184

affirmer of life: “To negate is the very thing that is impossible for him” (AC: 32). He claims that Jesus, through his teachings, abolished the whole traditional Jewish doctrine composed of moralized conceptions such as ‘guilt’, ‘sin’ and ‘punishment’ (see AC: 26, 33 & 41). And he also suggests that what Jesus exhibited through his death on the cross was “the freedom, the superiority over any feeling of *ressentiment*” (see AC: 40): what he recognises in Jesus is a way of getting rid of or overcoming *ressentiment* that is different from the one found in the ‘men of prey’ such as Napoleon. From such remarks, it is clear that Nietzsche is working with the idea of life-affirmation characterised by ‘the ability to *overcome* the elements of slavish morality in oneself’.¹⁶

It also seems to me that this inward conception of nobility and life-affirmation is in itself plausible. Here, let me quote the opening passage of Hermann Hesse’s novel Gertrude, written in the style of monologue narrated by the protagonist Kuhn, which can help us deepen our understanding of this particular conception. Hesse’s narrator in Gertrude remarks,

When I consider my life objectively, it does not seem particularly happy. Yet I cannot really call it unhappy, despite all my mistakes. After all, it is quite foolish to talk about happiness and unhappiness, for it seems to me that I would not exchange the unhappiest days of my life for all the happy ones. When a person has arrived at a stage in life when he accepts the inevitable with equanimity, when he has tasted good and bad to the full, and has carved out for himself alongside his external life, an inner, more real and not fortuitous existence, then it seems my life has not been empty and worthless. Even if my external destiny has unfolded itself as it does with everyone,

¹⁶ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 180-181

inevitably and as decreed by the gods, my inner life has been my own work, with its joys and bitterness, and I, alone, hold myself responsible for it.¹⁷

In my view, this passage captures the spirit of Nietzsche's inward conception of nobility and life-affirmation very eloquently: which is not surprising, since Hesse was profoundly influenced by Nietzsche.¹⁸ For instance, the inward life-affirmer would agree on how 'quite foolish' it is in the end to keep obsessing about the balance of amounts of happiness and unhappiness in one's life. For, as we saw, he is a possessor of the love of life which does not depend upon the weighing up of good and ill in it to come to a balanced judgement on its worth. So, because of this love of life, he would recognise this whole way of looking at 'life' in terms of happiness and unhappiness to be a shallow, superficial and wrong perspective on life that is dishonest to phenomenology of 'life'.

Likewise, while wishing that his life had contained fewer pains and sufferings, the inward life-affirmer would be able to say in earnest that 'I would not exchange the unhappiest days of my life for all the happy ones'. For, as I discussed, it is common that even when one's life does not 'seem particularly happy', one can still cherish it and find it to be not 'empty and worthless', because of the sheer fact of its being *one's* 'own work'.

Moreover, as we also saw, the inward life-affirmer is someone capable of dismissing such a possibility of his having his life over again with fewer or no 'unhappiest days' as a pointless fantasy. Through his life-experiences, he clear-sightedly recognises how 'bad' – pains, mistakes, failures and disappointments – constitutes an inevitable part of his life much more so than 'good' – pleasures and joys – does. As he 'has tasted good and bad to the full', he is mostly likely to be

¹⁷ Hesse (1974): p. 5

¹⁸ For a discussion on Nietzsche's influence on Hesse, see Reichert (1975): pp. 88-116.

aware of the fact that one's 'external life' hardly ever goes in the way one wants or expects, and thus that what truly matters is the quality of one's 'inner life' which one carves out for oneself: he is presumably someone who would find an notion of 'a pain-free life' odd and silly, and would agree with Orwell that "Most people get a fair amount of fun out of their lives, but on balance life is suffering, and only the very young or the very foolish imagine otherwise".¹⁹ So, on this recognition, while preferring his life to have contained less suffering, he 'accepts the inevitable with equanimity', and affirms even that suffering with as little resentment and bitterness as he can.

Furthermore, in my view, the reason the inward life-affirmer 'would not exchange the unhappiest days of my life for all the happy' is because he does not know, or rather he can no longer really tell, exactly which are 'the unhappiest days' of his life and which are 'the happy ones'. It is a common phenomenon that, as one gets older, one no longer really knows whether one is happy or unhappy. When one is young, one feels that one knows exactly what 'happiness' and 'a success' are. But, once one 'has tasted good and bad to the full', the whole idea of what count as 'happiness' and 'unhappiness' or as 'success' and 'failure' becomes increasingly blurred and opaque to one. This is partly because one's standard of or criteria for 'happiness' and 'success', one's conception of 'unhappiness' and 'failure', constantly changes as one goes through life, just as one's understanding of moral ideas does:²⁰ it is often the case that getting what one wants does not make one happy, since "one does not understand the *meaning* of what is wanted until one gets it; and when one gets it, its meaning usually turns out to be quite other than expected" – for instance, it is only when one actually acquires material wealth, which one has always wanted, after many years of struggle, that one realises the emptiness and

¹⁹ Orwell (2000c): p. 412

²⁰ See, e.g., Murdoch (1985): p. 29

unimportance of worldly goods.²¹ And the inward life-affirmer is someone who, after tasting himself ‘good and bad to the full’, clear-sightedly recognises the fluidity and somewhat fraudulent nature of the concepts of ‘happiness’ and ‘success’, ‘unhappiness’ and ‘failure’, or more generally, the temporal nature of one’s understanding of what is of value or significance in life.

There is clearly something admirable, noble and healthy about the person who can view and affirm his life in this ‘inward’ way. And, needless to say, a part of the admirableness lies in the fact that it is far from easy to possess this kind of attitude towards life. But, compared with the worldly life-affirmation, it does not appear to be a humanly unachievable ideal, for there were individuals who actually managed to affirm their life in such ‘inward’ way.

One of those individuals is, as Hamilton suggests, Montaigne, whose great suffering in his life was his illness: late in his life, he suffered from a ‘stone’ which caused “dreadful internal pain and the retention of urine accompanied by paroxysms”.²² During the discussion of his illness in his last essay ‘On experience’, Montaigne remarks,

It is unfair to moan because what can happen to any has happened to one . . . We must learn to suffer whatever we cannot avoid. Our life is composed, like the harmony of the world, of discords as well as of different tones, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, soft and loud. If a musician liked only some of them, what could he sing? He has got to know how to use all of them and blend them together. So too must we with good and ill, which are of one substance with our life. . . . I so order my soul that it can contemplate both pain and pleasure with eyes equally restrained . . . doing so with eyes equally

²¹ See Hamilton (2009): p. 65

²² Montaigne (2003): p. xlvi, *n.* 42

steady, yet looking merrily at one and soberly at the other and, in so far as it can contribute anything, being as keen to snuff out the one as to stretch out the other.²³

As Hamilton observes, “the central way in which Montaigne’s love of life expressed itself was in the quality of his spirit in his response to both pleasures and pains, to both joys and sorrows”.²⁴ Montaigne, of course, never actually wanted to suffer from his illness if he did not have to, and in all likelihood, if his life were to recur again, he would prefer it without that illness: for, as I suggested before, it is simply human nature to want to reduce one’s own sufferings or at least not to will any more suffering than one already has. But what demonstrates his affirmation of his life, what attests to the genuineness of his love of life and nobility, is the fact that he never allowed himself to be lost in empty fantasy about the possibility of having such a pain-free life: he remained to the end in touch with reality. Instead of wasting his time in entertaining such self-consoling fantasy, which blinds one to reality, he recognised and accepted his pains and sufferings as an inevitable part of his life with equanimity, without becoming bitter or resentful, just as he did his pleasures and joys.²⁵

Indeed, Montaigne was someone who knew how to be grateful to his life, to the whole process of life. And in particular, the way he responded to his pains and sorrows was not only admirable and noble, but also healthy. His response was admirable, since it is extraordinarily difficult for one to give up the fantasy of one’s having one’s life over again with less pain and suffering – we are particularly prone to this sort of fantasy in our misfortune, but also it is simply human nature always to desire more and imagine something better, to fail to remain

²³ Montaigne (2003): pp. 1236-1237 & 1262

²⁴ Hamilton (2000): p. 185

²⁵ See Hamilton (2001): pp. 62-63; also Hamilton (1998): p. 323

satisfied with, or appreciate, the value of that which we already possess.²⁶ And his response was healthy, because many of us, when faced with suffering or misfortune, tend to become sentimental and willingly indulge ourselves in such feelings as self-pity. In a way, we almost come to enjoy our suffering and misfortune, in the sense of taking pleasure in feeling sorry for ourselves. And in most cases, this whole emotional self-indulgence actually prolongs and worsens our experience of suffering and misfortune.

As we saw, in Nietzsche's view, most of us, when faced with suffering, commonly think that someone or other must be to blame for our suffering, and thus we seek a 'guilty agent' who is responsible for our suffering. This kind of reasoning, which underlies the Christian interpretation of suffering, is unhealthy, because it makes us become afflicted with *ressentiment* and other related feelings such as vengefulness, envy and mean-spiritedness, all of which Nietzsche considers to be characteristic of slave morality. Montaigne, on the other hand, clearly achieved freedom from such unhealthy reasoning, and did not seek someone or something to blame for his illness. Though he, in the face of his illness, presumably was not always entirely immune to *ressentiment* and struggled with all those slavish feelings from time to time, he ultimately managed to overcome them in his response to the illness. In the end, there was "an extraordinary *strength*" in Montaigne, and he was "possessed of that which Nietzsche called a free spirit".²⁷ What Montaigne showed through his experience of illness is "the *great health*" (GS: 382), *psychological* 'health' in the sense of "instinctively cho[osing] the *right* means against wretched states" (EH: *Wise*, 2): a characteristic which Nietzsche values and ascribes to 'higher types'.

²⁶ See Hamilton (2000): p. 184; see also Hamilton (1998): pp. 320-322

²⁷ See Hamilton (2000): p. 185

As Hamilton points out, Montaigne was able to respond to his sufferings in such a remarkably admirable and healthy way “because there was much else in his life which gave him spiritual nourishment or sustenance”. And the need of this sustenance in order to affirm life is clearly recognised by Nietzsche, as in GS he speaks of it in terms of experiencing ‘a tremendous moment’ which would cause one to wish the recurrence of one’s life for the sake of that moment (see GS: 341; also Z: IV, 19).²⁸ Hesse seems to be also aware of such need, as his narrator in Gertrude remarks,

Man’s life seems to me like a long, weary night that would be intolerable if there were not occasionally flashes of light, the sudden brightness of which is so comforting and wonderful, that the moments of their appearance cancel out and justify the years of darkness. The gloom, the comfortless darkness, lies in the inevitable course of our daily lives. Why does one repeatedly rise in the morning, eat, drink, and go to bed again? The child, the savage, the healthy young person does not suffer as a result of this cycle of repeated activities. If a man does not think too much, he rejoices at rising in the morning, and at eating and drinking. . . . But if he ceases to take things for granted, he seeks eagerly and hopefully during the course of the day for moments of real life, the radiance of which makes him rejoice and obliterates the awareness of time and all thoughts on the meaning and purpose of everything. One can call these moments creative, because they seem to give a feeling of union with the creator, and while they last, one is sensible of everything being necessary, even what is seemingly fortuitous. . . . Perhaps it is the excessive radiance of these moments that makes everything else appear so dark, perhaps it is the feeling of liberation, the enchanting lightness and the suspended bliss that make the rest of life seem so difficult, demanding and oppressive. . . . if there is a state of bliss and a paradise, it must be an uninterrupted sequence of such moments, and if this state of bliss can

²⁸ See Hamilton (2000): p. 186

attained through suffering and dwelling in pain, then no sorrow or pain can be so great that one should attempt to escape from it.²⁹

This passage, especially the attitude towards pain and suffering it depicts, is typically Nietzschean. But, here, what separates Montaigne and Nietzsche from Hesse's narrator is that Montaigne and Nietzsche both recognised how 'the inevitable course of our lives' does not have to be 'the gloom, the comfortless darkness', how this 'cycle of repeated activities' such as 'eating and drinking' can also potentially bring the comforting enriching 'radiance' to our lives. As Hamilton suggests,

Montaigne sought to show in his final essay – indeed, throughout *The Essays* – how, by attending to them properly, the most banal and quotidian of activities – eating, drinking, shitting, dressing, moving, breathing and so on – can provide (some of) the spiritual sustenance which allows us to affirm even our misfortunes and sufferings through accepting them in a spirit of equanimity. We see Montaigne's freedom of spirit as much as in his response to pleasure – and in his willingness to find pleasure where he could – as in his response to misfortune.³⁰

And, as we saw before, Nietzsche too always recognised the importance of attending properly to what he calls "these small things – nutrition, place, climate, recreation", of being able to take pleasure and find solace in these "little things" as "the basic concerns of life itself", which could significantly grace one's life: one of his criticisms of modernity and Christianity is that they

²⁹ Hesse (1974): pp. 102-103

³⁰ Hamilton (2000): p. 186

make light of or even despise these ‘small things’ (see EH: *Clever*, 10; also HAH: II, ii, 5-6, D: 553, GS: 7, TI: I, 33 & Chapter 3-C).

In the previous section, I discussed the distinction between an attitude of ‘just accepting my fate’ and an attitude of ‘accepting my fate *and also* trying to change it’. And I argued that the attitude of ‘just accepting my fate’, which Nietzsche’s idea of worldly life-affirmation seemingly encourages, can actually become life-denying, and that the attitude of ‘accepting my fate *and also* trying to change it’ is more life-affirming. Here, we could suggest that what the life-affirmation in the inward sense encourages is the attitude of ‘accepting my fate *and also* trying to change it’. For, as Hamilton remarks,

this affirmation of life [in the ‘inward’ sense] is wholly consistent with the attempt on the part of the affirmer of life in the relevant sense to seek to change the world in the light of his desires, needs and so on. For the point is rather that this kind of affirmation involves one’s not becoming bitter if one’s will proves unable to shape the world in this way. Further, this kind of affirmation is quite consistent with making very heavy demands on life itself. There is nothing in this kind of affirmation which requires modesty of desire.³¹

When faced with his illness, Montaigne did not ‘just accept’ it. He undoubtedly tried everything he could to cure or at least ease his illness, and never stopped longing to be free of it. And there must have been a moment where he was genuinely close to sinking into despair from the pain. But, as we have seen, the reason none of these prevent him from being noble and a life-affirmer in the inward sense is that, even though his attempt to extricate himself from the illness effectively came to nothing, not only did he always clear-sightedly recognise and ultimately

³¹ Hamilton (2000): p. 186

manage to accept the reality of it as it was, but also, in the process, his spirit always essentially remained intact, hardly ever tainted by bitterness or resentment or self-pity.

Now, in the previous section, we examined Staten's objection in regard to the difference between an affirmation of one's own life and an affirmation of 'life' in general. And I suggested that Nietzsche seemingly considers it to be possible for one to affirm in the worldly sense not just one's own life but 'life' in general, including all the human sufferings it contains. For Nietzsche is sometimes tempted to suggest that being indifferent to the sufferings of others is the same as an affirmation of those sufferings. However, I also argued that his suggestion is mistaken, since being completely indifferent to the sufferings of others is not the same as affirming those sufferings. How about this inward conception of life-affirmation we have been discussing? Is it possible for one to affirm in the inward sense not just one's own life but 'life' in general? Can we ever make sense of such a notion of life-affirmation?

Hamilton suggests that we can. As we have seen, what characterises someone who affirms his life in the inward sense is his love of his life which does not depend upon the weighing up of good and ill in it to come to a balanced judgement on its worth. And because of this, it is not inconsistent of him to prefer his life to have contained fewer pains and sufferings, even as he affirms it with those pains and suffering. Now, if such an inward affirmer is to affirm 'life' in general in the inward sense, he will likewise "not view others and their deeds on the model of weighing up what is good and bad in them in order to arrive at a balanced judgement on their value". Hence this will allow the inward affirmer to condemn others for their shoddy behaviour or to seek to bring about the cessation of their sufferings, even as he affirms their lives. That is, this will, for instance, allow him to affirm the lives of both the criminals and their victims in a way which has "nothing to do with actually affirming the very actions that they commit or the very sufferings that they undergo". And this would be not just an affirmation of his own life, but

also “an affirmation of the inwardness of others – an affirmation of the world on behalf of others”.³²

According to Hamilton, what fundamentally underlies such an inward affirmation of ‘life’ is the thought that “one *shares a common lot* with others”. That is, an inward affirmer of ‘life’ will recognise that “however mean, squalid, petty or even evil a person’s life is, it is still a life with a meaning, even if that meaning is elusive to the person whose life it is”, and through this recognition he will also think that “the fact that it is a life with meaning gives the person in question a dignity or value independent of e.g. the vileness of his actions”: or, in the case of those who are suffering, an inward affirmer will think that they have a dignity or value independent of their afflicted condition – what he affirms is not this afflicted condition of theirs *per se*. For, in affirming such a life of a person, what this inward affirmer is doing is expressing his sense that the meaning of his own life is illuminated by the meaning of this person’s life, and thus that he is also “implicated” in this person’s life. So, in this way, while the inward affirmer would condemn any vile actions or deeds of the other, he will also think “that he shares with the other a joint responsibility for humanity; that it is only by luck or grace that he has not committed the deeds that the other has committed; and that he is therefore in some way enmired in the guilt in which the other is enmired”.³³

As Hamilton suggests, such sense of sharing a common lot or a joint responsibility with others for humanity is clearly manifested by Primo Levi, who was a victim of Auschwitz, in his comments about Nazis.

³² See Hamilton (2000): pp. 188-190

³³ See Hamilton (2000): p. 190

the just among us [victims of Auschwitz], neither more nor less numerous than in any other human group, felt remorse, shame and pain for the misdeeds that others and not they had committed, and in which they felt involved, because they sensed that what had happened around them in their presence, and in them, was irrevocable. It would never again be able to be cleansed; it would prove that man, the human species – we, in short – were potentially able to construct an infinite enormity of pain; and that pain is only force that is created from nothing, without cost and without effort.³⁴

Even though Levi certainly thought that Nazis' deeds were vile and should never go unpunished, he still recognised their lives as lives with a meaning, by which the meaning of his own life was illuminated. Hence, he considered Nazis to have dignity or worth independent of these vile deeds of theirs, and at the same time also considered himself to be jointly responsible, and to share a common lot, with them for humanity: thoughts, both of which enabled him to remain free of hatred for Nazis. And it was this freedom from hatred that enabled him to affirm the Nazis "in a way that had nothing to do with approving of their actions and everything to do with wanting punishment for them with a concern for justice of the purest form, utterly free from feelings of revenge".³⁵

So, if what we have just discussed is correct, it seems that we can make sense of a notion of the inward life-affirmation that involves not only an affirmation of one's own life but also an affirmation of 'life' in general. But then, the problem is that, as Hamilton points out, such notion of the inward affirmation of 'life' is something of which we cannot make proper sense within the terms of Nietzsche's philosophy, since there is simply no room in his philosophy for the idea that each individual human being possesses a unique dignity or worth independent of

³⁴ Levi (1989): p. 66

³⁵ See Hamilton (2000): pp. 191-192

his deeds. Indeed, as I suggested before, there are many remarks Nietzsche makes on the masses which indicate that he does not recognise any intrinsic value or worth in them. Further, what his mature writings increasingly display is a profound sense of responsive 'disgust' towards the masses. In this sense, he clearly does not believe that the meaning of his life could be illuminated by the lives of the masses, or that he shares a common lot or a common responsibility with the others.³⁶

So, in conclusion, I have argued in this chapter that Nietzsche presents two different conceptions of 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation', a 'worldly' and an 'inward' conception, without clearly distinguishing one conception from another, and also without properly working out either conception. I have argued that Nietzsche's 'worldly' conception of nobility is implausible, because of his inability to give a concrete example of the worldly nobles, coupled with our inability to go back to being exactly like them. And though we could redeem this implausibility by interpreting the worldly nobles as 'an archetype', his 'worldly' conception of nobility is still problematic, since the way of life symbolised by the worldly nobles is not only impossible to lead successfully in the modern world, but also in itself hollow.

And I have also argued that Nietzsche's idea of 'worldly' life-affirmation is also implausible. For, firstly, the worldly life-affirmation as an unconditional overall type of life-affirmation can become life-denying in certain contexts. Secondly, what one can affirm in the worldly sense is only one's own life, not 'life' in general, including others' suffering. And thirdly, even it were

³⁶ See Hamilton (2000): p. 192

possible to affirm others' suffering in the worldly sense, there would clearly be certain human sufferings which we should never affirm in the worldly sense.

Further, I have argued that while Nietzsche's 'inward' conception of nobility and life-affirmation helps us see the possibility of a notion of the inward life-affirmation that involves not only an affirmation of one's own life but also an affirmation of 'life' in general, such a notion of the inward affirmation of 'life' is something of which we cannot make proper sense within the terms of Nietzsche's philosophy. For, there is no room in his philosophy for the idea that each individual human being possesses a unique dignity or worth independent of his deeds, which is crucial to that notion. In this sense, Nietzsche's 'inward' conception of nobility and life-affirmation ultimately remains implausible.

As I suggested before, there is no doubt that this failure of Nietzsche's to establish a clearly plausible conception of 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation' contributes greatly to the obscure nature of his conception of 'higher types'. Nevertheless, it seems to me that our examination of those two different conceptions of 'nobility' and 'life-affirmation' has helped us identify what could plausibly be regarded as two key characteristics – which are essentially interrelated – that make people 'noble' and subsequently 'higher types' in Nietzsche's view. Firstly, 'life-affirmation' especially in the sense of a freedom from slave morality, more specifically, in the sense of *overcoming* the elements of slave morality in oneself. And secondly, 'creativity' especially in the sense of giving 'style' to one's character. With these two key characteristics of 'higher types' in mind, I shall now examine Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking.

Chapter 5

Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking

In this chapter, I investigate the nature of Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking. In Section A, as I illustrate how Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking focuses on 'the life-affirming type of gods', I examine his idea of the nature and effects of these gods, with reference to his criticism of the Christian conception of God. I argue that, against the background of his criticism of the Christian God who condemns certain intrinsic parts of our life, what Nietzsche in his mature works increasingly recognises and values is the way the life-affirming gods deify "all things, whether good or evil" (BT: 3). And I also argue that, against the background of his criticism of the Christian 'monotheistic' God who forces on people one universal norm of life-denying nature, what Nietzsche in his mature works recognises and emphasizes in relation to the life-affirming gods is the value of 'polytheism'. And in the process, I also discuss a significant interpretative issue concerning Nietzsche's attacks on Christianity. I suggest that the core of his criticism of Christianity lies with the 'value' or 'effects' of the Christian beliefs, not with their 'truth'.

Then, in Section B, I present and argue for my view of how Nietzsche considers the life-affirming type of gods to contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'. As I discuss Julian Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking, I suggest that Nietzsche does not aim to recreate a Greek religion or a new religious myth. Rather, I argue, what Nietzsche wishes to offer through his continual positive valuation of 'the life-affirming type of gods' is a particular religious perspective on 'life'. More concretely, through his

symbolic image of 'the life-affirming gods', what he tries to give us is a new religious sensibility.

Section A: Nietzsche's continual positive valuation of 'the life-affirming type of gods'

Many commentators acknowledge the presence of 'religious communitarianism' in BT, which argues that modernity can be redeemed from the decadence only through the rebirth of pre-Socratic Greek tragedy as a 'communal' religious festival promised by Wagner's music-drama. However, such thinking has been traditionally regarded as something exclusive to Nietzsche in the early period. The consensus has been that Nietzsche eventually abandoned his religious communitarianism, and that he became an atheist, anti-religious. Against this fixed idea, Young claims that Nietzsche "*never* was" an atheist, *never* was anti-religious, for "Nietzsche in fact *never* abandoned his religious communitarianism". Hence, Young argues, "Though atheistic with respect to the *Christian* God, Nietzsche, I hold, ought to be regarded as a religious *reformer* rather than an enemy of religion".¹

As I will argue, I agree with Young that Nietzsche always was a profoundly religious thinker. However, as I suggested in Chapter 1-A, Young seems wrong to claim that Nietzsche always maintained his religious communitarianism. For, on this point, I agree with many commentators that Nietzsche ultimately abandoned the religious communitarianism, and embraced instead the 'aristocratic individualistic' thinking which is primarily concerned with the flourishing of few exceptional individuals whose existence itself forms the cultural greatness of community. And as I also suggested, with this crucial change, his positive religious thinking also changed its shape and nature. After abandoning religious communitarianism, Nietzsche became a 'religious' aristocratic individualist, who sets the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest goal and attempts to find the way to achieve it in a certain conception of 'gods' symbolised by the Olympian gods of ancient Greece. In other words, contrary to Young's view,

¹ See Young (2006): p. 2

the real positive aspects of the mature Nietzsche's philosophy of religion lie not in the 'communal' life-affirming religion that contributes towards the flourishing of 'community', but in 'the life-affirming type of gods' who can contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types'. And the aim of this chapter is to argue for this view of mine fully.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Nietzsche's early religious thinking was characterised by his idea of two types of life-affirming religion, the Apollinian type and the Dionysian type, which he proposed as two possible solutions to make our life bearable. Now, much of his early religious thinking does not feature in his mature works. But, as I discussed in Chapter 3-A, this is not only because of his abandonment of religious communitarianism. Equally crucially, after his separation from Wagnerianism which marks the end of his early period, he began rejecting metaphysics, including that of Schopenhauer which extensively underlay his early religious thinking. Further, as he tried to free himself from what he now perceived to be the 'life-denying' pessimism of Schopenhauer, he began developing his ideas of life-affirmation, which tries to 'embrace' life as a whole completely without resorting to any metaphysical mediation: which I examined in Chapter 4. And with these changes, his positive religious thinking came to take on a different shape and nature in his mature works.

However, this does not mean that his early religious thinking has no relevance to his mature positive religious thinking. Indeed, as if being true to his own programme for showing that nothing in one's past should be treated as waste, he continues to maintain and develop some of the key elements of his early positive religious thinking. One such element is the idea of the life-affirming type of gods as "a transfiguring mirror", which he originally presented in his discussion of the Apollinian type in BT (see BT: 3). For instance, in HAH written at the beginning of his middle period, he remarks,

The un-Hellenic in Christianity. – The Greeks did not see the Homeric gods as set above them as masters, or themselves set beneath the gods as servants, as the Jews did. They saw as it were only the reflection of the most successful exemplars of their own caste, that is to say an ideal, not an anti-thesis of their own nature. They felt inter-related with them . . . Man thinks of himself as noble when he bestows upon himself such gods, and places himself in a relation to them such as exists between the lower aristocracy and the higher Where the Olympian gods failed to dominate, Greek life too was gloomier and more filled with anxiety (HAH: I, 114).

With his rejection of metaphysics, he has abandoned his youthful idea of the Apollinian ‘redemption in illusion’, i.e. a contemplation of the world of the Olympians as an extraordinary beautiful appearance attained through the *principium individuationis*: in fact, throughout his mature works, he hardly ever speaks of the world of the Olympians as an image world of beautiful illusion. But, as the passage shows, he continues to maintain the idea that the Olympian gods as the life-affirming gods are the “ideal picture” of the ancient Greeks’ own existence, the gods founded on a human ideal, the gods who live “the life of men” themselves (see BT: 3). And he continues to suggest that the life-affirming gods were essential to the flourishing of the Greeks as the archetype of the ideal ‘life-affirming’ life.

However, there is also a significant change to his view of the life-affirming type of gods as ‘a transfiguring mirror’. For instance, in AC written near the end of his career, he remarks,

A people that still believes in itself retains its own god. In him it reveres the conditions which let it prevail, its virtues: it projects its pleasure in itself, its feeling of power, into a being to whom one may offer thanks. Whoever is rich wants to give of his riches; a proud people needs a god: it wants to

sacrifice. Under such conditions, religion is a form of thankfulness. Being thankful for himself, man needs a god (AC: 16).

By ‘a people that still believes in itself’, Nietzsche clearly means the worldly nobles such as the ancient Greeks. As we saw in Chapter 2-A, Nietzsche in BT argued that what drove the Greeks to establish their religions was their ‘life-denying’ pessimistic worldview, which interpreted their existence as utter pain. Being exceptionally sensitive to and totally powerless against suffering, they were “in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will”. So, they needed to create their life-affirming gods in order to ‘bear’ their existence (see BT: 3 & 7). However, in the second preface of BT – added to the book fourteen years after its first publication –, Nietzsche now claims that what drove the Greeks to establish their religions was not the life-denying ‘pessimism of *weakness*’, so to speak, but rather their “pessimism of *strength*”, their “intellectual predilection for the hard, gruesome, evil, problematic aspect of existence, prompted by well-being, by overflowing health, by the *fullness* of existence” (BT: ASC, 1). In other words, he now suggests that the Greeks were already the life-affirming worldly nobles who not only can ‘bear’ but also can willingly ‘*embrace*’ their suffering, when they “*needed*” and created their “art” qua religion (see BT: ASC, 1).² And with this change, he also now suggests in his mature works that the life-affirming gods were created not in response

² In BT, Nietzsche speaks as if only the Apollinian type, i.e. the world of the Olympians, was created by the Greeks from “a most profound need” (BT: 3), namely, in response to their pessimistic outlook on life: since, remember, he does not explain why they needed the Dionysian type, i.e. tragedy, apart from mentioning that it originated in the Dionysian festivals. But, in the light of the context of the book, which I discussed in Chapter 2-A, we could plausibly suggest that the Dionysian type too was created from the same profound need. Now, here in the second preface of the book, Nietzsche appears to speak as if only tragedy were created from the ‘pessimism of *strength*’. However, looking at the above passage of AC, as well as all the remarks he makes on the life-affirming gods to which I will refer hereafter, it is clear that he also considers the Olympian gods to be created from the fullness of existence.

to one's powerlessness against "the terror and horror of existence" (BT: 3), not as a means to overcome one's 'life-denying' pessimistic worldview, but rather in response to one's "joy, strength, overflowing health, overgreat fullness" (BT: ASC, 4), as a means to celebrate their superior power and their life-affirmation further. So, in his view, just like master morality, the life-affirming gods are essentially 'self-glorification', an honest expression of the noble's active self-affirmation (see TI: X, 3).

This point is also emphasized in Nietzsche's account of the origin of the Christian God. Nietzsche remarks in AC,

Originally, especially at the time of the kings, Israel also stood in the right, that is, the natural, relationship to all things. Its Yahweh was the expression of a consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself: through him victory and welfare were expected; through him nature was trusted to give what the people needed – above all, rain. Yahweh is the god of Israel and therefore the god of justice: the logic of every people that is in power and has a good conscience. In the festival cult these two sides of the self-affirmation of a people find expression: they are grateful for the great destinies which raised them to the top; they are grateful in relation to the annual cycle of the seasons and to all good fortune in stock farming and agriculture (AC: 25).

So, in Nietzsche's view, the ancient Israelites during the period of the Kingdom were the worldly nobles, for whom religion was indeed 'a form of thankfulness'. They were the powerful, high-minded, life-affirming individuals who were exaltedly conscious of their distinctive attributes which placed them above others. Hence, they possessed their 'own god', Yahweh as a life-affirming god, who was a projection of such exalted consciousness of theirs, "an expression of the self-confidence of the people" (AC: 25). Yahweh the god of Israel was 'the god of

justice', because he represented their "egoism" as the essence of their noble soul, namely the "unshakable faith that to a being such as "we are" other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves", which they accepted unquestioningly as if "it is justice itself" (see BGE: 265). In the same manner as the ancient Greeks needed the Olympian gods, the ancient Israelites created Yahweh purely for the purpose of self-glorification, in order to express the joy they felt towards themselves as well as their surrounding world that had allowed them to prevail and maintain their sense of their own goodness.³

Indeed, Nietzsche elsewhere insists that, traditionally, religion, or the relationship between god[s] and people, were – and still are – characterised by 'fear'. At the beginning, gods originated from people's fear towards unpredictable, uncontrollable nature (see HAH: I, 111). Later, gods also originated from people's fear towards their ancestors and their power (see GM: II, 19-20; also Chapter 4-C). But, among the worldly nobles such as the ancient Greeks and the ancient Israelites, in their relationship to their life-affirming god[s] as their self-glorification, this 'fear' was replaced by "piety" (see GM: 19): what characterises their "religiosity" is "the enormous abundance of gratitude" towards nature and life (see BGE: 49).⁴ And, in Nietzsche's view, this is how the relationship between a people and god[s] should be.

However, according to Nietzsche, this state of affairs where the 'right' relationship between the Israelites and Yahweh had been preserved was later "done away with in melancholy fashion: anarchy within, the Assyrian without". Through internal and external conflicts, the Israelites as

³ Nietzsche's positive view of the ancient Israelites is also illustrated by the fact that, while he is critical of the New Testament (see AC: 46), he often speaks favourably of the Old Testament. He suggests that the latter contains "great human beings, heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naïveté of the *strong heart*" (GM: III, 22; also HAH: I, 475 & BGE: 52). For a discussion of Nietzsche's positive attitude towards Judaism in general, see Santaniello (1994). For discussions on Nietzsche's positive valuation of the ancient Israelites and their Yahweh, see Golomb (2000) & Murphy (2001).

⁴ See Young (2006): pp. 152-154

powerful rulers were demoted to the powerless ruled and lost their nobility. And while they – even after such state of affairs disappeared – still continued expecting their victory and welfare through Yahweh as in the old days, and hoped that they would be restored to their old position through Yahweh, their hopes were never fulfilled. And to those Israelites who could no longer regain their nobility but had to remain dissatisfied with themselves as the powerless ruled, and who thus could no longer be grateful for their situation, Yahweh as the symbol of their life-affirmation became useless: “The old god was no longer able to do what he once could do. They should have let him go”. Yet, they did not relinquish Yahweh. Instead, they retained him by changing his nature. And this altered conception of Yahweh is the Christian conception of God (see AC: 25).

Nietzsche considers this rise of the Christian God to be a part of ‘the slave revolt in morality’. However, his discussion of it, most of which we find in GM, is often confusing. For instance, one of the chief puzzles concerns who really conducted the slave revolt, since whereas Nietzsche at certain places appears to portray the slave revolt as what happened among ‘the slaves’, he elsewhere appears to regard ‘the priests’ as its true ringleaders. Now, different commentators have attempted to solve this puzzle in various ways. The most typical approach, especially among those commentators who are concerned with the reconstruction of GM as a coherent historical narrative, is to interpret the slave revolt as a two-stage process conducted separately by ‘the slaves’ and ‘the priests’.⁵ But, my suggestion is that we could plausibly avoid facing this puzzle if we recognise and focus on the fact that, as ‘archetypes’, both ‘the slaves’ and ‘the priests’ symbolise a similar type of being, in particular, similar kind of psychological characteristics.

⁵ See, e.g., Ridley (1998)

That is, as I have argued, Nietzsche's historical narratives and genealogical accounts are essentially 'fictional' narratives, and all the characters who appear in these narratives, such as 'the masters', 'the slaves' and 'the priests', are essentially 'archetypes' that Nietzsche creates as an 'instructive' means to illuminate those of his and others' inner states which he takes to reveal typical psychological patterns in human beings. So, although Nietzsche presumably believes that Christian morality and the Christian conception of God were established among 'the Jews' – among the Israelites who had lost worldly nobility –, his aim is not to provide a factual historical account of it. Instead, just as he does with the history of ancient Greece, he uses the actual history of Israel as both a source of inspiration and material to develop his own imaginary history of Israel. And through this essentially fictional narrative, what he intends to offer are his insights into certain '*universal*' and '*timeless*' psychological facts about the origins of morality, namely why, how and under what kind of psychological conditions one is driven to need, create and accept a certain type of morality and a related conception of god (see Chapter 2-A). And in his view, the slave type of morality and the related life-denying conception of god, typified by Christian morality and the Christian God, are always created "out of the spirit of *ressentiment*" (EH: *GM*). They are needed, created and accepted by a type of beings whom he calls 'men of *ressentiment*', whose psychology is characterised by the feeling of weakness and powerlessness and the frustrated self-deceptive desire for revenge, which 'the slaves' and 'the priests' both symbolise.⁶

⁶ This approach is plausible, since Nietzsche makes clear that what he discusses in *GM* is not some specific historical moralities but "two basic types" of morality that can be found throughout history (see BGE: 260), and that the establishment of Christian morality by the Jews is "the most notable example" (*GM*: I, 7) – and apparently the earliest example (see BGE: 195) – of the slave revolt in morality, among others. Moreover, he claims explicitly that the priests appear "regularly and universally . . . in almost every age", belong to "no one race" and prosper "everywhere", and that their mode of valuation "stands inscribed in the history of mankind not as an exception and

In GM, Nietzsche repeatedly describes ‘the priests’, or ‘a priestly people’, of which he uses the Jews as a representative, as individuals who are members of high social standing like ‘the masters’ and yet weak and unhealthy both in body and soul like ‘the slaves’: despite being noble in socio-political sense, they are not the worldly nobles, since they are slavish in both physiological and psychological sense (see, e.g., GM I: 6-7). However, at one point, he also remarks that the priest “emerges from every class of society” (GM: III, 11). And later in EH, he claims that what he offered in GM was “the first psychology of the priest” (EH: *GM*). Moreover, as we saw before, while Nietzsche regards political superiority, and also to some degree physical superiority, as what originally enabled the worldly nobles to develop their ‘master morality’, he also insists that what really concerns him and us is superiority of soul, “nobility of soul” as a “*typical character trait*” of the worldly nobles (see GM: I, 4-6). So, in the light of these, it is clear that what we ought to focus on is the priests’ or priestly people’s lack of ‘nobility of soul’, the *psychological* characteristics they share with ‘the slaves’, which Nietzsche does not ascribe to worldly nobility.⁷

Psychologically, the crucial element that unites the priests and the slaves is that although they both hate the masters for their own reasons – the slaves are oppressed by the masters, and the priests are held in contempt by the knightly masters for their inactive and unwarlike way of life – and want to take revenge on the masters, they both are also envious of the masters’ power

curiosity, but as one of the most widespread and enduring of all phenomena” (see GM: III, 11). For an approach to this issue similar to mine, see Owen (2007): pp. 83-85.

⁷ Likewise, in my view, while Nietzsche uses the terms ‘the Jews’ and ‘the priests’ interchangeably, he does not necessarily mean that the historical Jews were actually the priests who belonged to a high socio-political class. Rather, the Jews are transformed by him into a people who typically possess certain *psychological* characteristics which the ‘the priests’ as the archetype symbolises. That is, what really concerns us is the fact that Nietzsche consider ‘the Jews’ to be “the people embodying the most deeply repressed priestly vengefulness” (see GM: I, 7). This way of approaching things enables us to avoid speculating on such issues as how the Jews in captivity were able to retain – or regain – the high social status, their status as noble in the socio-political sense.

and strength: they wish to be just like the masters. And at one level, this envy and these desires of theirs – which also constitute their hatred of the masters – make them psychologically unhealthy by causing them to deny their own self as well as their surrounding world. However, because they are physically weak and impotent, they can neither become like the masters nor express their instincts and desires towards the masters freely in physical action. This has two implications. Firstly, by being unable to discharge their instincts and desire properly in action, they acquire great inner depths through the ‘*internalization*’, which makes them clever, prudent and calculating individuals: they become inactive “contemplative men”, in contrast to the masters who are active ‘men of action’. And secondly, their forcibly repressed envy, hatred and vengefulness amplify, fester and eventually turn into *ressentiment*. Further, because of their physical impotence and great inner depths, their *ressentiment* becomes poisonous, in contrast to that of the masters which “consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*”. And this makes them psychologically even unhealthier. And in Nietzsche’s view, the slave revolt in morality happens when these powerless ‘men of *ressentiment*’ are prompted by their poisonous *ressentiment* to express their instincts and desires not by means of physical actions, but by means of their great inner depths instead (see GM: I, 6-7, 10, II, 16, III, 10 & EH: GM; also Chapter 4-A).

I explained in Chapter 4-A how the way *ressentiment* produces slave morality is *reactive* in nature. Since those men of *ressentiment* do not possess sufficient power to carry out physical revenge as “the true reaction” against their hatred and envy towards the masters, they try to compensate themselves with ‘an imaginary revenge’, namely, with an establishment of new values that would devalue the masters. But, in the light of their inability to affirm their self, they cannot create their *own* values ‘spontaneously’ out of themselves as the worldly nobles can. Hence, they instead, out of their *ressentiment*, invert the masters’ morality with the

value-distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Through this inversion, they first design the concept ‘evil’ as the primal value of their morality, which represents what harms them, namely, the masters. Then, they define the concept ‘good’ as the negation of ‘evil’, which represents what is unlike the masters, namely, the ‘men of *ressentiment*’ themselves. And by establishing their own ‘slave morality’ with the value-distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in this way, they imaginarily place themselves above the masters spiritually, and gratify their unsatisfied vengefulness against the masters: they deceive themselves and convince themselves of their goodness and their spiritual superiority over the masters (see GM: I, 7 & 10-11).

But then, the situation will not improve for the men of *ressentiment*, unless the masters accept those ‘slave’ valuations. So, as a part of their imaginary revenge, in order to solidify and make their valuations appear justifiable to others as well as to themselves, they also falsify the masters’ conception of god[s] to create their own conception of god, namely, the Christian God, and invent the Christian ‘moral world order’ founded on the ascetic ideal. And with this, they establish the ‘priestly interpretation of suffering’ that involves the exploitation of guilt and the bad consciousness through their ‘moralization’: which I examined in Chapter 4-C.⁸ And, as I also suggested, Nietzsche considers the nobles – who increasingly suffer from *pre-moral* guilt and the *pre-moral* bad conscience – ultimately to fall victim to such ‘priestly interpretation of suffering’, through which they come to experience *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience:

⁸ One of the confusions here is that whereas Nietzsche in AC says that the Christian God was invented when the Israelites who had lost worldly nobility changed the nature of their Yahweh, in GM he says that the Christian God was invented when the men of *ressentiment* inverted the masters’ conception of god[s]. But, in my view, though it is impossible to construct a coherent historical narrative out of these two different accounts, there is no real discrepancy between them, since Yahweh and the masters’ god[s] are the same type of god[s] which the worldly nobles typically possess as the symbol of their life-affirmation. That is, though expressed in two different story lines, Nietzsche’s main point is that the rise of the life-denying type of god, typified by the Christian God, always involves the falsification of the life-affirming type of god[s] out of *ressentiment*.

the highly clever and cunning ‘men of *ressentiment*’ find no difficulty in converting the nobles to their own ‘slave’ valuations.

Nietzsche’s attitude towards this establishment of Christianity is positive in some respect. For, as I discussed in Chapter 4-A, in terms of producing new forms of human greatness, the profound *reactive* creativity of the men of *ressentiment*, which is founded on great inner depths and a wide variety of drives, possesses greater potentialities than the unrefined *active* creativity of the nobles who are inwardly empty. Indeed, in Nietzsche’s view, it was the way the men of *ressentiment* reactively conceived values through their rigorous evaluations of the causes of their suffering that first made mankind – its history and culture – complex, interesting and attractive. Further, what the men of *ressentiment* achieved through the establishment of Christianity was the creation of a new set of original values by ‘a revaluation of all values’, which is precisely what Nietzsche urges us to achieve (see BGE: 46, 195, 250 & GM: I, 6-7).⁹ But then, his attitude towards Christianity is predominantly critical. He believes that the triumph of the Christian ‘slave’ morality and the related Christian conception of God over the last two millennia or so is the chief cause of the sickness of modernity, of the decadence of contemporary ‘life’ and ‘culture’.

Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity is extremely extensive and diverse, which makes it difficult to establish what exactly he criticises. In particular, one of the chief interpretative issues concerns whether he attacks the ‘truth’ of the Christian beliefs or the ‘value’ of the Christian beliefs.

Some commentators suggest that the core of Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity lies with its ‘truth’. For instance, Schacht claims,

⁹ In *AC*, Nietzsche also seemingly values the scale of psychological “vital energy” the Jews expressed in the establishment of Christianity, which is founded on what he calls “the Jewish instinct”, namely their uncompromised instinct to survive at “*any price*” (see *AC*: 24). See Banham (2000): pp. 70-71.

For Nietzsche, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance (both practical and philosophical) of the question of whether or not there is a God. As he observes, with regard to belief in God, so much 'was built upon this faith, propped up by it' that its abandonment has consequences beyond 'the multitude's capacity for comprehension' (*GS* 343). One could fairly characterise a good deal of his philosophising as an attempt to draw out these consequences, for a whole range of issues: to show what positions are thereby rendered as untenable, and to proceed to deal with these issues in the manner he takes to be indicated when both the very idea of God and the long 'shadow' cast by this idea over much of our ordinary and traditional philosophical thinking are banished.¹⁰

I think Schacht's claim cannot be correct. Certainly, by speaking of the death of God, Nietzsche does express his grave concern about the effects that the decline of the belief in the Christian God has on modern European culture. In his view, the majority of dominant values, virtues and worldviews of Europe have been underpinned by Christian beliefs, including the belief in the existence of an otherworldly realm. So, once this underpinning is gone, we would suddenly face a situation where there is nothing really worth affirming. But then, Nietzsche clearly does not seem to concern himself with the conventional question of the existence of God itself. For he claims explicitly in *AC*, "That we find no God – either in history or in nature or behind nature – is not what differentiates us" (*AC*: 47). Likewise, he remarks in the *Nachlass*, "Hitherto one has always attacked Christianity not merely in a modest way but in the wrong way . . . the question of the mere 'truth' of Christianity – whether in regard to the existence of its God or to the legendary history of its origin . . . is quite beside the point" (*WP*: 251).

Indeed, while Nietzsche often critically speaks of the Christian beliefs and conceptions – 'God', 'sin', 'the kingdom of God', 'eternal life', and so on – as being all imaginary and

¹⁰ Schacht (1985): p. 119

irrational, that they are ‘errors’ (see, e.g., TI: III, 6 & AC: 15), he elsewhere seemingly suggests that the implausibility of Christianity is not in itself objectionable, since he also talks about how some ‘errors’ are necessary conditions of life. For instance, he claims in BGE,

The falseness of judgement is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgement . . . The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that falsest judgements (which include the synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live – that renouncing false judgements would mean renouncing life and a denial of life. To recognize untruth as a condition of life – that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil (BGE: 4; see, also GS: 121).

As I emphasized before, even after his separation from Schopenhauer’s pessimism, Nietzsche nevertheless continues to believe that life will forever possess in its nature the terrible aspects characterised by unavoidable pain and suffering. Even after BT, he still recognises the validity of ‘Dionysian wisdom’, i.e. of the horrible truth about the ultimate nature of existence, and continues to believe that the direct recognition of such wisdom, or the sight of the world as it, is simply unbearable, and thus that we must somehow conceal it from ourselves as we would otherwise perish. In BT, he describes ‘the Apollinian type’, ‘the Dionysian type’ and ‘Socratism’ as three different types of “illusion spread over things”, which the world-artist uses as means to “detain its creatures in life and compel them to live on” despite such terrible nature of existence

(see BT: 18). And even in his mature works, he essentially maintains that we need such an ‘illusion’ which can make life – at least appear – meaningful, purposeful and thus bearable.

Hence, my view is that Nietzsche does not really question whether a certain religious belief or morality or conception of god is true, since he considers all religious beliefs, moralities and gods to be humanly-constructed ‘illusions’, which we necessarily create to preserve ourselves (see, e.g., Z: I, 3 & GM: III, 13).¹¹ Certainly, he often proclaims his allegiance to “the rigorous methods of acquiring truth” (HAH: I, 109). But, as we saw before, the ‘truths’ which he is committed to discovering are mostly such things as the psychological facts about the origin of moralities and gods, that is, how and under what kind of condition one requires, creates and accepts a certain type of ‘illusion’ (see, e.g., GS: 7 & BGE: 187). In fact, he claims in D that the discovery of such psychological facts actually makes a proof of the non-existence of God “superfluous” (see D: 95). And more crucially, as he makes clear in the above-quoted passage of BGE, what truly concerns him is whether and to what extent such an ‘illusion’ is not just ‘life-preserving’, but also ‘life-promoting’ and ‘species-cultivating’, that is, whether accepting it can help making individuals life-affirming and flourish as higher types (see GM: *Preface*, 3 & 5).

So, the core of Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity lies not with the ‘truth’ of the Christian beliefs in the sense of their rationality and plausibility, but rather with their ‘value’ or ‘effects’, or more concretely, with the psychological – and also to some degrees physical – consequences of one’s acceptance of the Christian ‘illusions’. Still, given the extensive and diverse nature of his criticism of the ‘value’ of Christianity, it is impossible for me here to make any detailed attempt to examine all the possible aspects of Christianity that he attacks. But, in Chapter 4, I

¹¹ More precisely, he considers them ‘aesthetically’ constructed illusions, since he, even after BT, continues to regard every outlook – worldview – that prescribes meaning to human existence as in essence an ‘aesthetic’ outlook.

have suggested what I consider to be two key characteristics – which are interrelated – that make people ‘noble’ and subsequently ‘higher types’. Firstly, ‘life-affirmation’ especially in the sense of a freedom from slave morality, more specifically, in the sense of *overcoming* the elements of slave morality in oneself. And secondly, ‘creativity’ especially in the sense of giving ‘style’ to one’s character. Hence, through the rest of this section, I shall focus on two chief aspects of the Christian ‘illusions’, which are, in Nietzsche’s view, particularly life-denying and hinder people from attaining these two characteristics. And in the process, I will also illustrate two key positive effects of the life-affirming type of gods which Nietzsche in his mature works recognises and particularly values in this regard.

The first chief aspect of Christianity that Nietzsche finds particularly life-denying and an impediment to the nurturing of higher types is the way Christianity condemns certain intrinsic parts of life. As we saw, Christian morality and the Christian God were established by the ‘men of *ressentiment*’ in their attempt to gain superiority over the nobles: they, out of their *ressentiment*, invert and falsify the nobles’ morality and life-affirming type of god[s] as ‘self-glorification’ to create a new value-system that would devalue the nobles. So, under the Christian God, what is condemned as ‘evil’ is everything that the life-affirming nobles possess and are proud of, everything that has allowed them to prevail and prosper. These things include worldly and physical power and strength, bodily – sensual – pleasures, all the natural instincts to which the nobles are faithful, such as cruelty and sexuality, and all those ‘egoistic’ characteristics and emotions such as greed, pride, envy, vanity and lust (see, e.g., AC: 5 & 21).

As I illustrated in Chapter 4, according to the mature Nietzsche’s ideas of ‘life-affirmation’, which is a key characteristic of higher types, life should be affirmed totally and unconditionally, or at least one must try to *embrace* every aspect of life as something valuable in itself – ‘nothing in what one is should be wasted’. And Nietzsche clearly considers all those natural instincts and

egoistic characteristics and emotions to be an inevitable and permanent feature of life. So, in his view, Christianity, its 'moral' view of life, is life-denying, as it wrongly condemns certain parts of life and thus stops us from seeing and accepting life as it actually is.

Moreover, Nietzsche also considers the Christian 'moral' view of life to be 'life-harming'. In order to solidify their 'slave' valuations, the men of *ressentiment* invent the Christian 'moral world order' founded on the Christian ascetic ideal, which involves the postulation of an otherworldly realm, from whose viewpoint the nobles and everything they possess indeed appear 'evil'. And with this, they establish the 'priestly interpretation of suffering' – through which the bad conscience and guilt become moralized –, which regards suffering as punishment of the Christian God. It claims that the reason why we are suffering is because we are being punished by God, which is purely the result of our being 'guilty' before God, i.e. having unpaid debt to God, of our being 'the sinners' by disobeying God's will that is expressed in the Christian ascetic ideal (see Chapter 4-C). But, it also claims that we can be forgiven by God, i.e. our debt to God can be redeemed, if we repent and submit ourselves to the Christian ascetic ideal and its virtues such as 'humility', 'compassion' and 'love of one's enemies': if we practise self-denial and un-egoistic actions such as self-sacrifice and pity, which Christianity promotes as 'good', we will ultimately enter the Kingdom of God where our suffering of this life will be compensated (see, e.g., AC: 25-27).

At one level, by positing the Kingdom of God as a perfect afterlife, what the priestly interpretation of suffering, i.e. the Christian teleological 'otherworldly' justification of human existence, does is to devalue this life as a whole. It claims that nothing in this world is ultimately important or pointful or fulfilling, and that true meaning and happiness lie only in Kingdom of God: it reduces and treats this life as something inferior, as a mere path towards the ultimate, greater end. In this way, the men of *ressentiment* take revenge on the reality of this

world, which has made them – against their wish and hope – powerless, impotent and oppressed (see TI: III, 6, AC: 15 & EH: *Destiny*, 8).

At another level, this Christian interpretation also generates in us a piercing sense of self-condemnation. Our human nature is so fundamentally anti-ascetic and self-concerned, so firmly characterised by aggressive instincts, sensual desires and egoistic characteristics and emotions, that we are bound constantly to violate the God's will which is expressed in the Christian ascetic ideal. This means that we are intrinsically 'guilty' before God, tainted with 'original sin'. Further, to make the matter worse, the Christian interpretation also tells us how, 'out of *love*' for us as the debtor, God as the creditor has sacrificed Jesus, His Son, for our guilt, for our sinfulness: so, our debt to God is enormous.¹² Yet, despite such astonishing sacrifice, we are still fundamentally incapable of obeying God's will, of living up to the Christian ascetic ideal. This makes our debt to God practically 'irredeemable', thereby increasing our feeling of guilt to the extreme: we are to be burdened with a permanent sense of guilt (see GM: II, 19-22, III, 20 & AC: 25-26; also Chapter 4-C).

As we saw in Chapter 4-C, formerly, *pre-moral* guilt people feel towards the ancestors qua god[s], whether that was founded on 'fear' as in the case of the primitive tribal people or founded on 'piety' as in the case of the nobles, was nothing more than a mere sense of reverence and appreciation. It was easily solvable by the offerings of sacrifices and music or, in the case of

¹² Nietzsche regards this establishment of Christian doctrine of 'atonement' as the falsification of Jesus' teachings and the real meaning of Jesus' death by Paul, whom Nietzsche often uses as a representative of 'men of *ressentiment*': the key moment in the establishment of Paul's 'historical' Christianity (see, e.g., D: 68 & AC: 24). For, as we saw before, in Nietzsche's view, Jesus was an affirmer of life. Jesus, through his teachings, abolished the whole traditional Jewish doctrine composed of moralized conceptions such as 'guilt', 'sin' and 'punishment' (see AC: 26, 33 & 41). And what Jesus exhibited through his death on the cross was "the freedom, the superiority over any feeling of *ressentiment*" (see AC: 40). For a discussion on Nietzsche's view of Christ as a life-affirmer, see Berkowitz (1995): pp. 109-114. For a discussion on Paul's distortion of Jesus, see Han (2000): pp. 124-127. For a discussion on Jesus' freedom from *ressentiment*, see Santaniello (1994): pp. 118-121.

the nobles, by victories in wars, that is, by showing off “the *noble* qualities” that they the nobles shared with their ancestors – the qualities that originally allowed their ancestors to prosper, which now also became manifest in the nobles themselves (see GM: II, 19): so, in a sense, among the nobles, *pre-moral* guilt ultimately promoted self-glorification.¹³

By contrast, *moral* guilt, i.e. the Christian notion of ‘sin’, which one experiences before the Christian God is “a feeling of total depravity” (HAH: I, 114), a relentless, permanent sense of absolute “unworthiness” before God, which promotes a strong feeling of self-hatred, self-disgust and self-condemnation (see GM: II, 20-22). While it gives a meaning to suffering, makes our suffering bearable and thus saves us from “suicidal nihilism”, it also causes us to become ashamed and contemptuous of our being, of our human nature (see GM: II, 7 & III, 28; also Chapter 4-C). Hence, it totally undermines our ‘self-reverence’ and hinders us from attaining ‘self-satisfaction’, both of which are essential to another key characteristic of higher types, namely, *active* ‘creativity’ – founded on ‘life-affirmation’ – especially in the sense of spontaneously creating one’s *own* values, of giving ‘style’ to one’s character. Further, this permanent sense of guilt before God also intensifies and sharpens our *moral* bad conscience as will to self-torture, thereby causing it to take root more firmly in us. And all this generates in us an additional, much more persistent and life-harming ‘intensional’ suffering, thereby undermining our psychological health further (see Chapter 4-C). So, simply put, in Nietzsche’s view, the Christian God found on the ascetic ideal is a terrible, anti-life, anti-human illusion, in which one’s human nature becomes the reason to torture oneself: a life-preserving and yet extremely self-tormenting illusion.

Nietzsche also objects to Christianity’s condemnation of our egoistic characteristics and emotions specifically in relation to ‘human greatness’: this brings us back to the points I made

¹³ See Young (2006): pp. 153-154 & Owen (2007): p. 110

in Chapter 4-A. That is, while Nietzsche never goes so far as to claim that all those egoistic characteristics and emotions such as greed, envy and vanity are simply in themselves ‘good’ and ‘admirable’ and should be encouraged, he clearly regards them not simply as an inevitable and permanent feature of life, but also as essential to much that is good and valuable in life. In this respect, he talks about the necessity of the “*spiritualization* of passion”. Much as he – for various reasons, as I illustrated before – is fascinated by such things as war, intoxication and the worldly nobles’ rampages where one’s natural instincts and impulses are freely exposed in its purest form, he also claims that the totally uncontrolled, unrestricted raw passions and desires are “merely disastrous”: there exists in them “the element of stupidity” that brings “unpleasant consequences” (see TI: V, 1). Though he fails to explain what these ‘unpleasant consequences’ are, he is presumably pointing out how such unbridled raw egoistic passions can be often transformed into brutality and cruelty, and consequently lead to “many actions called immoral” that “ought to be avoided and resisted” (D: 103). But then, he argues, the way Christianity attempts to prevent these ‘unpleasant consequences’ by “extirpation”, that is, by rejecting and condemning all the intrinsic egoistic passions of ours as ‘evil’, is not only “*hostile to life*” but also “merely another acute form of stupidity”, just like “dentists who “pluck out” teeth so that they will not hurt any more”. Instead, we need to “spiritualize, beautify, deify” those passions, “wed” them to “the spirit”: we must shape and sublimate them into our virtues, make them contribute to our whole greatness (see TI: V, 1 & 3; also HAH: II, ii, 83).

And Nietzsche is clearly right on this. For, as I argued in Chapter 4-A, there is no doubt that all those egoistic characteristics and emotions, though unpleasant in themselves and often painful to experience, did play an essential role in Napoleon’s relentless pursuit of worldly glory and thus in his great achievements, which many of us can openly admire. And had he not possessed and experienced them, he simply could not have flourished in the way he did. But

then, it is also clear that the creativity founded on unbridled raw passions – as that of the worldly nobles – is unlikely to yield what we call human greatness. So, in this context, Nietzsche throughout his mature works repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of self-discipline and self-moderation. And, indeed, Napoleon was in no sense a slave of his passions: he was someone who was very hard with himself. He managed to achieve so much in his life, and was able to create himself in the way he did, because he had a firm hold over his passions, and thus was able to regulate and incorporate them into a synthetic unity: so, he could restrain his passions when necessary, but could also become very bold, fearless and brutal when the occasion demanded. And it was this ability of his that largely made him an integrated life-affirming individual with an undeniable ‘style’.

Against the background of such criticism of the Christian God who condemns certain intrinsic parts of our life, what Nietzsche in his mature works increasingly recognises and values is the way the life-affirming type of gods deify “all things, whether good or evil” (BT: 3). For instance, in GM, he explicitly insists that a conception of god[s] does not have to be an “instrument of torture” (GM: II, 22) like the Christian God. He writes,

there are *nobler* uses for the invention of gods than for the self-crucifixion and self-violation of man in which Europe over the past millennia achieved its distinctive mastery – that is fortunately revealed even by a mere glance at the *Greek gods*, those reflections of noble and autocratic men, in whom *the animal* in man felt deified and did *not* lacerate itself, did *not* rage against itself! For the longest time these Greeks used their gods precisely so as to ward off the “bad conscience,” so as to be able to rejoice in their freedom of soul – the very opposite of the use to which Christianity put its God (GM: II, 23).

From what we have seen, it is clear that Nietzsche is here talking about the *moral* bad conscience, and emphasizing the idea of the life-affirming gods as ‘a transfiguring mirror’ which he continues to develop from BT.¹⁴ Being members of prosperous communities, even the ancient Greeks inevitably experienced the *pre-moral* bad conscience and *pre-moral* guilt (see Chapter 4-C). But the reason why they managed to avoid their bad conscience and guilt from becoming moralized and transformed into a strong feeling of self-disgust is because, under their Olympian gods, these conceptions did not become connected to their human nature, in the way they do under the Christian God.

That is, whereas the Christian God embodies, and demands of us to conform to, the ascetic ideal, which is essentially an anti-human ideal, the Olympian gods as the life-affirming gods are the “ideal picture” of the Greeks’ own existence, the gods founded on a human ideal. Whereas man “apprehends in “God” the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable animal instincts” (GM: II, 22), what the Greeks saw in their Olympian gods was “only the reflection of the most successful exemplars of their own caste . . . , not an anti-thesis of their own nature” (HAH: I, 114). Compared with the Christian God before whom one experiences “a feeling of total depravity” and a relentless sense of absolute unworthiness, the Olympian gods were gods with whom the Greeks “felt inter-related”, and before whom they had no need to be ashamed of themselves (see HAH: I, 111 & 114). Under the Christian God, who forces us to see our ‘animal’ instincts and egoistic characteristics and emotions as ‘evil’ – the ‘guilt’ towards Him –, our ‘bad consciousness’ as will to self-torture becomes – through moralization – deeply attached to our human nature: we are driven to torture ourselves simply for being humans (see GM: II, 22 & 24). But, on the contrary, among the Greeks, a whole human existence was defied and justified by the gods who themselves live “the life of men” (see BT: 3), who themselves possess and

¹⁴ See Young (2006): p. 154

experience all those human ‘evil’ instincts and emotions: “Such a god must be able to help and to harm, to be friend and enemy . . . What would be the point of a god who knew nothing of wrath, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, and violence? who had perhaps never experienced the delightful *ardeurs* of victory and annihilation?” (AC: 16; see, also, D: 38). In fact, under such gods as the Greeks’ ‘self-glorification’, those instincts and emotions were celebrated as ‘good’, as what had allowed the Greeks to prevail and prosper. In this way, the Greeks’ bad conscience never led to any feeling of self-disgust or self-condemnation, and they were able to continue expressing their natural aggressive instincts with ‘freedom of soul’, without becoming ashamed or contemptuous of them (see HAH: II, i, 220).

So, there is clearly a change in Nietzsche’s positive valuation of the life-affirming type of gods. As we saw in Chapter 2-B, in BT Nietzsche values the life-affirming gods most particularly for the way they help people to overcome their pessimist outlook on life, both by veiling the terrors and horrors of existence and by transforming human existence into something truly “desirable in itself”. In other words, to the youthful Nietzsche, the most important thing about the world of the Olympians is the fact that it is an idealisation of actual world that depicts a “fantastic excess” of ‘human’ life (see BT: 3 & 17). But now, to the mature Nietzsche, the most important thing about the life-affirming gods is the fact that they are a type of gods founded on a human ideal, transfigured images of human life, which have no relation to “asceticism, spirituality, or duty” (BT: 3), and in whom “all things, whether good or evil” – including one’s ‘animal’ instincts and egoistic characteristics and emotions, which the Christian God condemns as ‘evil’ – “are deified”, so that they do not act as “a command or a reproach” (see BT: 3). In other words, what Nietzsche now increasingly recognises and values in such life-affirming gods is their ability to help one to affirm oneself entirely, by not making one

ashamed of one's "natural", "all-too-human" characteristics and emotions (see HAH: II, i, 220): the key characteristic Nietzsche ascribes to higher types.

The second chief aspect of Christianity that Nietzsche finds particularly life-denying and an impediment to the nurturing of higher types is the way Christianity imposes upon us one universal norm: its forceful qualitative equalisation of all individuals and homogenisation of their interests. As we saw earlier, the men of *ressentiment* gain their spiritual superiority – their sense of power – by converting others who are unlike themselves – the nobles – to their Christian valuations, making them accept their Christian moral values and virtues. And in order to maintain this superiority, Christian morality claims its universal applicability and denies any other morality, any other perspective on life (see, e.g., AC: 9). By using its 'monotheistic' conception of God as the Eternal Law, as the absolute judge of 'good' and 'evil', Christianity preaches to everyone that the Christian 'moral' way of life founded on the Christian 'ascetic' virtues is the one and only right way to live, the only way to flourish and gain happiness: it tells everyone indiscriminately that "Man *ought* to be such and such!" (TI: V, 6).¹⁵

However, as we saw in Chapter 4-A, it is clear from his fascination for the historical 'men of prey' that Nietzsche believes that, contrary to Christian morality which imposes a single 'moral' way of life, there could possibly exist many different ways of flourishing. While the worldly nobles' way of life, which powerful 'men of prey' such as Napoleon have led, is deemed to be un-virtuous from the Christian perspective, there is no doubt that Napoleon – in one way or another – did flourish and did bring something new, beautiful and life-affirming to the world through this very way of life.

¹⁵ In this respect, Nietzsche considers the Christianity "Platonism for 'the people'" (BGE: *Preface*), its universalistic, rationalistic and monistic understanding of human flourishing an heir to the "Socratic equation of reason, virtue, and happiness" (TI: II, 4).

But then, as we also saw, Nietzsche recognises that not everyone can flourish through the worldly nobles' way of life. The chief reason why Napoleon was able to lead the worldly nobles' way of life so successfully is that, as well as possessing all the characteristics which make him a perfect fit for such way of life, he was also placed in certain favourable socio-political conditions for it. And for most of us moderns who simply lack these characteristics and socio-political conditions, any attempt to lead this whole free, active and brutal way of life would only end in disaster. On the other hand, it is very likely that had Napoleon attempted to lead a Christian way of life, he would have been a complete failure: in the light of his extremely active and energetic nature, his high-mindedness, his relentless lust for worldly power and prestige, his less-developed moral sensitivity, and so forth, he would have been inwardly crushed and made miserable under the Christian virtues. At the same time, it is obvious that had Napoleon attempted to embrace Christian virtues while leading the worldly nobles' way of life, he would also have been a complete failure: the Christian virtues such as humility, meekness, love of one's enemies, kindness and compassion are so detrimental to the pursuit of worldly power and prestige in many respects that he would have been exploited and destroyed in no time.

It is largely on the basis of this recognition that Nietzsche criticises the notion of universally-binding virtues or a universally-valid 'good' as life-denying. Each individual is – by and large – intrinsically different, born with different characteristics and temperaments, belonging to a natural different 'character-type', possessing different needs and interests. At the same time, the condition of life each individual faces is also deeply influenced and determined by his surroundings, for instance, by the state of the epoch, or of the community, to which he belongs, as well as by the position in the community which he occupies. So, naturally, every individual's requirements for well-being and happiness, each individual's 'goods' in the sense

of what “heightens the feeling of power in man” (AC: 2), are different, varying from place to place, and varying over time (see, e.g., GS: 116). This means that what is beneficial for one type of person placed in a certain life-situation can well be harmful to another type of person placed in another life-situation: “What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type. The virtues of the common man might perhaps signify vices and weaknesses in a philosopher” (BGE: 30). Further, Nietzsche emphasizes that not only do individuals seek different ‘goods’ or have different ideas about the rank of ‘goods’, but they also have different notions about what to count as “really having and possessing something good” (see BGE: 194). As such, he insists repeatedly that morality is a matter of taste, and that, instead of accepting “Good for all, evil for all” (Z: III, 11, 2), one must discover and create one’s *own* ‘virtues’, ‘goods’, ‘ideals’, which are in accordance with one’s own needs, interests and condition of life: the ability which Nietzsche ascribes to the worldly nobles and ultimately to higher types (see GS: 55, BGE: 30 & AC: 11; also Chapter 4-A).

So, much as Nietzsche considers the Christian ‘ascetic’ way of life, in which one inflicts suffering on oneself and can even come to take pleasure in doing so, as life-denying and unhealthy in itself, he acknowledges that some people may be suited to the Christian way of life, that some people might flourish and become happy by being virtuous in the Christian ‘moral’ sense. For instance, in AC he suggests that, to the Jews who lost worldly nobility and had to survive as the powerless ruled, what was appropriate and useful to their conditions of self-preservation was no longer a national ‘life-affirming’ god and master morality as a delightful expression and celebration of a people’s worldly strength and power, but the moralised ‘good’ monotheistic God who counsels everyone to accept the Christian virtues such as ‘modesty’ and ‘love of one’s neighbour’: a type of god whom he calls “a cosmopolitan” (see AC: 16). And while our condition of life is decisively different from that of the Jews, Nietzsche

also suggests that, to the ordinary masses as the ‘herd type’, who possess a strong need for “obedience”, the Christian virtues such as “public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, and pity” may indeed be appropriate and useful (see BGE: 199). Further, he makes clear through his extensive discussion of asceticism in the third essay of GM that even those who are natural commanders like Napoleon, or potential higher types who are destined to command, need to espouse the Christian virtues such as ‘chastity’ voluntarily in certain situations and contexts, for instance, in order to cultivate and enhance their creativity and intellectuality: as I said, there can be no human greatness without self-discipline and self-moderation. But then, for someone like Napoleon who single-mindedly wished for and pursued worldly power and prestige, what was predominantly appropriate and useful were not the profoundly unworldly virtues of Christianity, but worldly virtues: for Napoleon, being the un-virtuous in the Christian ‘moral’ sense, espousing many ‘vices’, was the key to his success and happiness.

Nietzsche also objects to the universal virtues on the basis of his recognition of the necessity of tension or conflicts between different ideas and values, which stimulate people’s creativity to establish new ideas and values. In this context, he emphasizes “the value of having enemies”: “A new creation in particular . . . needs enemies more than friends: in opposition alone does it *feel* itself necessary, in opposition alone does it *become* necessary” (TI: V, 3). If we wish to create something new, we need to act and think “in the opposite way from that which has been the rule” (TI: V, 3). If we wish to perform a revaluation of values to produce a new set of values, we need an old set of values that we can find objectionable. On the other hand, if everyone were to cherish and adopt the same values and virtues, there would hardly be any tension or conflict between different ideologies which is essential to the evolution of culture: this could lead to the stagnation of culture that Nietzsche deeply fears (see, e.g. HAH: I, 235). And also, particularly

for Nietzsche who sometimes affects to take “a kind of god’s-eye view of the world”, the world where everyone adopts a similar outlook and leads a similar pattern of life would be colourless and “tedious”.¹⁶

Against the background of such criticism of the Christian ‘monotheistic’ God who forces on people one universal norm of life-denying nature, what Nietzsche in his mature works recognises and emphasizes in relation to the life-affirming type of gods is the value of ‘polytheism’.

For an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joys, and rights – . . . The wonderful art and gift of creating gods – polytheism – was the medium through which this impulse could discharge, purify, perfect, and ennoble itself . . . Hostility against this impulse to have an ideal of one’s own was formerly the central law of all morality. There was only one norm, *man*; and every people thought it possessed this one ultimate norm. But above and outside, in some distant overworld, one was permitted to behold a *plurality of norms*; one god was not considered a denial of another god, nor blasphemy against him. It was here that the luxury of individuals was first permitted . . . Monotheism, on the other hand, this rigid consequence of the doctrine of one normal human type . . . was perhaps the greatest danger that has yet confronted humanity. It threatened us with the premature stagnation that, as far as we can see, most other species have long reached . . . In polytheism the free-spiriting and many spiriting of man attained its first preliminary form – the strength to create for ourselves our own new eyes – and ever again new eyes that are even more our own: hence man alone among all the animals has no eternal horizons and perspectives (GS: 143; see, also, Z: III, 12, 11).

¹⁶ See Tanner (2000): p. 95

The Christian ‘monotheistic’ God is a universal god, ‘a cosmopolitan’, who indiscriminately commands everyone to adopt the Christian moral values and virtues and lead the Christian ‘moral’ way of life, irrespective of his own characteristics, desires, interests and needs: by claiming it to be the one and only right way to live and flourish, the Christian God denies any other pattern of life. On the other hand, being created as a means of ‘self-glorification’, the life-affirming gods such as the Olympian gods of the ancient Greeks and Yahweh of the ancient Israelites are a type of god[s] who reflect their own people’s peculiar condition of life, their specific needs and interests, and thus who are only appropriate and useful to their own people: this is why once the Israelites lost their nobility they should have abandoned Yahweh as the symbol of their life-affirmation, since such god was no longer appropriate or useful to their new drastically-changed condition of life (see AC: 17).

Indeed, according to Nietzsche, the nobles, such as the ancient Greeks, discovered their ‘virtues’ through their long and continual struggles against enemies. What the Greeks called ‘virtues’ were practically their own distinctive ‘qualities’ that helped them continue surviving and prevailing in the midst of constant terrible risk of being exterminated, such as their physical strength, their fearless nature and their ability to express their natural aggressive instincts freely and delightfully (see BGE: 262): so, he at one point emphasizes, “The magnificent physical suppleness, the audacious realism and immoralism which distinguished the Hellene constituted a *need*, not “nature.”” (TI: X, 3). And it was through the rigorous cultivation of these virtues that the Greeks made sure that they as a people remained the triumphant, strong and powerful knightly-aristocratic type of men “beyond the changing generations” (see BGE: 262; also HAH: I, 96): among the Greeks, virtue was essentially “fitness”, “virtue that is moraline-free” (AC: 2), something appropriate and useful to their condition of life, to their battling life. And for the Greeks, the Olympian gods as the ‘ideal picture’ of their own existence, ‘the reflection of the

most successful exemplars of their own caste', were indeed essential to the preservation of such virtues of theirs, to their continuous survival and flourishing. What the Greeks needed were the immoral "evil" gods, who defied the Greeks' 'animal' nature by themselves knowing "wrath, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, and violence" and experiencing "the delightful *ardeurs* of victory and annihilation", so that the Greeks could continue expressing their natural aggressive instincts with 'freedom of soul', which was indeed appropriate and useful to their condition of life (see AC: 16).

So, in contrast to the Christian God who imposes upon people one 'universal' ideal of life-denying 'anti-human' nature, what Nietzsche in his mature works seemingly recognises and values in the life-affirming type of gods is their ability to accommodate various life-affirming 'human' ideals. By allowing people to posit their own ideals in accordance with their own 'character-types', needs, interests and condition of life, the life-affirming gods enable and help people to discover and create their own virtues and goods, to discover and possess a 'style' of their own, and to flourish in their own 'human' ways, thereby contributing towards the nurturing of higher types. Further, by making the existence of various different ways of life possible, the life-affirming gods also encourage conflicts of different values and ideas, thereby promoting the evolution of culture and the creation of new forms of human greatness.

Section B: 'The life-affirming type of gods' as Nietzsche's symbolic image

So far, I have outlined Nietzsche's mature positive religious thinking, his positive valuation of 'the life-affirming type of gods' that we find in his mature works. But now, the question is what all those positive remarks he makes on the life-affirming type of gods actually mean to us moderns. Do they have any practical application? Is he suggesting that we too should create our own life-affirming gods, build a temple or the like, and start worshiping them, just as the ancient Greeks did?

A commentator who espouses such a – what I may call – 'institutional' reading is, as we saw, Young. Young claims that Nietzsche always maintained religious communitarianism: his highest value always was the flourishing of community, which, he continued to believe, can only be achieved by the re-creation of 'communal' life-affirming religious festival modelled on pre-Socratic Greek tragedy. Further, Young also claims that "the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy is, in a broad sense, a *political* vision", namely, "a vision of a hierarchically organised community in which everyone knows and takes pride in their station within it, a society created, persevered and unified by an ethos-embodying communal religion".¹ On these bases, Young argues, "What Nietzsche is looking for is a new Greece, a new *polis* brought to unity and health by a re-created version of Greek religion".² It is not "a literal return to Greek religion", but a creation of "something that is 'contemporary and Greek', something that shares the essential characteristics of Greek religion but at the same time makes living sense in the current context": "a rebirth of something resembling the religion of the Greek temple and

¹ Young (2006): p. 179

² Young (2006): p. 144

amphitheatre, something with the life- and humanity-affirming characteristics of Greek religion”.³

According to Young, what constitutes the focal point of such a new religious ‘communal’ festival is a “polytheistic array” of *healthy* “role-modelling gods”, who represent “not a non- and so anti-human ideal, but rather an idealisation of humanity itself”, and who also embody a *healthy* “shared community-creating ethos”, which is essential to the creation and preservation of an authentic and *healthy* society absent from modernity: what the life-affirming type of gods provide is “the stratified and yet unified ethos”, which is capable of creating and unifying ‘a community’ and ‘a culture’, as well as giving aspiration, identity and meaning both to one’s ‘communal’ and to one’s ‘individual’ life.⁴ These gods are artistically mythologized and glorified exemplary figures who function as objects of veneration, inspiration and imitation: hence, “what the healthy society worships are its own potentialities for (‘polytheistic’) excellence”.⁵ And such an array of gods must be “a living myth”, in which its figures are constantly reinterpreted, when necessary, “in order to make sense in the current context”, so that it can continue to embody and preserve the unified ethos of a community.⁶

Now, in my view, from what we saw in the previous section, Young is correct to recognise Nietzsche’s positive valuation of ‘the life- and humanity-affirming characteristics of Greek religion’. And the idea of the life-affirming type of gods as ‘healthy’ role-models seems also in itself plausible. There is no doubt, as Young suggests, that for Nietzsche “a *non*-human role model is an *anti*-human role model”, since “a role model so perfect as to be beyond even slight emulation has a depressing rather than an inspirational effect”, and that “the Greek gods, unlike

³ Young (2006): pp. 100-101 & 192

⁴ See Young (2006): pp. 32, 155, 166 & 191-192

⁵ See Young (2006): pp. 42, 87 & 192

⁶ See Young (2006): pp. 26 & 37

the Christian God, are *healthy* role models since they embody . . . human, and even all-too-human characteristics”.⁷ Indeed, Nietzsche remarks, “The Christian who compares his nature with that of God is like Don Quixote, who under-estimated his own courage because his head was filled with the miraculous deeds of the heroes of chivalric romances: the standard of comparison applied in both cases belongs in the domain of fable” (HAH: I, 133). And there is also something plausible and attractive about the idea of ‘a living myth’, or the idea of the life-affirming gods as ‘flexible’ role-models, so to speak, who can be constantly reinterpreted and changed, in order always to reflect the changes in people’s condition of life:⁸ as we saw, Nietzsche thinks that, just like a morality, a conception of god[s] can outlast its utility, as in the case of Yahweh. But, in the light of my reading of Nietzsche as ‘an individualist’ rather than a life-long communitarian, it seems to me more plausible to suggest that what the ‘polytheistic array’ of life-affirming gods embodies and provides, if it does, is not a shared ‘communal ethos’ which binds together and preserves a community, but rather various types of ‘life-affirming’ ethoi which suit different kinds of life and help individuals to flourish in their own ways. And in fact, I suspect that Nietzsche at one point may have indeed positively recognised and seriously reflected upon the possibility of the life-affirming gods’ contributing towards the nurturing of higher types by acting as *healthy* and ‘flexible’ role-models – educators of potential higher types –, who represent various humanistic ideals, and function as objects of inspiration and

⁷ See Young (2006): pp. 65-67 & 178. While the Christian God is a non- and thus anti-human ‘unhealthy’ role model, not many of us would actually ever consider Him as a role-model or an object of emulation. But still, many of us would likely feel a depressing sense of inferiority before Jesus the Christian God incarnate, the supreme moral exemplar who supposedly perfectly embodied all the Christian ‘ascetic’ values and virtues, if we were to emulate him seriously: though Jesus actually possessed all-too-human characteristics too, as he, for instance, famously threw the traders out of the Temple in a rage (John 2: 13-16).

⁸ Silk and Stern document that “with no powerful priestly caste, no church, no bible, no set theology, Greek religion and its gods were always subject to change. They were in the hands of their worshippers, including especially the poets and others who perpetuated their representation” (Silk & Stern 1983: p. 167).

imitation: in a sense, we could also interpret his obsession with all those exceptional historical figures such as Goethe and Napoleon as his attempt to identify role-models who can inspire potential higher types to greatness.⁹

However, I find Young's 'institutional' reading problematic in several respects. To begin with, it seems to me doubtful that Nietzsche aimed for a revival of Greek religion, in the sense of creating a new temple and worshipping gods altogether as a community. Certainly, it is true that there are some passages in his works where Nietzsche seems to speak of a new festival: "The vision of a feast that I shall yet live to see" (EH: *BT*, 4). And, just as in the case of his attitude towards an old type of hierarchical society, in the light of both his persistent admiration for ancient Greece and the occasional proclivity to naivety his writings display in certain contexts, it is possible that Nietzsche might have secretly longed for the re-creation of Greek religion, especially when his predominate mood was nostalgic. But then, he claims explicitly in *TI*, "a reversion, a return in any sense or degree is simply not possible", including that to "a former measure of virtue" (TI: IX, 43). So, it seems that, when more rigorously realistic, he recognises that it is not after all possible for us moderns to recreate such a religion. Further, he in *GS* also claims that we "who are homeless", "children of the future", to whom he addresses and commends his ideas and thoughts, i.e. those of us who are potential higher types, "'conserve nothing': neither do we want to return to any past periods" (see GS: 377). Such a claim also seemingly indicates that what he seeks is not a revival of Greek religion.

Moreover, another problem with Young is that, even if it is possible for us to recreate such a religion, the description of this new festival he provides in his book, which, according to him,

⁹ Bertram is another commentator who regards the creation of a new religious mythology as one of Nietzsche's chief aims. But, in Bertram's view, it is not the life-affirming type of gods, who will play the leading part in this new myth: rather, it is Nietzsche himself as the 'educator' of 'higher types' (see Bertram 2009: *passim*).

Nietzsche seeks to create, is so abstract, that it is not at all clear what this festival would be like and how it would function. For instance, Young claims,

Nietzsche's 'ideal' for the future includes the rebirth of something resembling the hierarchical structure of the medieval Church, the rebirth of a society unified by the discipline of a common ethos, a discipline expounded and given effect through respect for the spiritual authority of those who occupy the role once occupied by priests. It goes without saying, of course, that the content of the new 'church's' message will be naturalistic rather than transcendentalist, will be moulded by 'physics' (GS 290) rather than metaphysics. It will be a life-affirming rather than life-denying church, a humanistic religion whose gods are modelled on the Greek gods.¹⁰

However, throughout his book, Young fails to discuss basic matters such as what this new life-affirming church – where the festival would presumably be performed – would look like – whether it would look like a Christian church or a Greek temple or a Greek amphitheatre –, where and how many churches would be built, how often we would attend the festival, how these new priests – who would presumably conduct the festival – would be selected, what the festival would be composed of, and so on.

Likewise, Young never explains in any detail what the content of a new community-creating religious myth would be like: whether it would be a poem or a prose in style, whether an epic or a tragedy in nature. Certainly, as we saw, Young suggests this new myth to be a life-affirming 'living myth', in which its role-modelling gods are inspired by the ancient Greek gods, but also revised and updated, so that it would make sense and be relevant to us in the present context. So, for instance, in this context, Young remarks, "Figures from Greece inspired . . . the Italian

¹⁰ Young (2006): p. 99

Renaissance but that did not entail wandering around in sandals and togas. Rather, Greek ‘moulds’ were ‘recreated’ in terms, as it were, of modern dress”.¹¹ But then, what does it mean to ‘recreate’ and translate the Greek myth into a form that speaks to us moderns in a living way? What exactly would the ‘contemporary and Greek’ myth be like? What would the role-modelling gods who reflect our current life be like? Would it be like a myth in which its figures wear suits or T-shirts and jeans, drive a car or ride a tube, and receive e-mails and phone calls? Or would it be like a modern version of the *Iliad*, in which its figures ride tanks instead of chariots, and fight with guns instead of spears? And all this abstractness of Young’s descriptions is purely owing to the fact that Nietzsche himself never provides any detailed account on such matters.¹² This, I think, gives us another reason to doubt the seriousness of Nietzsche’s commitment to a revival of Greek religion.

And we could also question who will create this new ‘contemporary and Greek’ myth. Young seemingly suggests that it is going to be those whom Nietzsche calls the poets “*as signpost to the future*”, who will “*imaginatively develop* a fair image of man”, by emulating the artists such as those of ancient Greece who “*imaginatively developed the existing images of the gods*”: the poets who will imaginatively develop, “without any artificial withdrawal from or warding off of this world”, a model of “the great and beautiful soul”, through whom “the excitation of envy and emulation help to create the future” (see HAH: II, i, 99; also HAH: II, i, 172).¹³ But, in Nietzsche’s view, such poets simply do not exist in the modern world: “Oh if the poets would only be again what there were once supposed to have been: –*seers* who tell us

¹¹ Young (2006): p. 37

¹² While Young does claim that such abstractness – his and Nietzsche’s failure or reluctance to prescribe a specific content to this new myth – are owing to “Nietzsche’s formalism”, this seems to me an evasion (see Young 2006: p. 211, *n.* 9).

¹³ See Young (2006): pp. 74-75 & 87

something of the *possible*! . . . If only they would let us feel in advance something of the *virtues of the future*! . . . Astronomers of the ideal, where are you?” (D: 551). In other words, in Nietzsche’s view, an exceptional creativity which is necessarily for recreating and translating the Greek myth into a form that speaks to us moderns in a living way, for revising and updating the ancient Greeks life-affirming gods to create new role-modelling gods who reflect our current life, is something simply lacking in the modern world.

Furthermore, another problem with the ‘institutional’ reading is that, even if Nietzsche is serious about a recreation of Greek religion, it is difficult to see, from his descriptions alone, how such religion is supposed to work in today’s world. For instance, in GM, during his discussion of how the way the ancient Greeks used the Olympian gods to “ward off” the *moral* bad conscience was “*nobler*” than the way men of *ressentiment* invented the Christian God “for the self-crucifixion and self-violation of man”, Nietzsche also claims,

“foolishness,” “folly,” a little “disturbance in the head,” this much even the Greek of the strongest, bravest age conceded of themselves as the reason for much that was bad and calamitous – foolishness, *not* sin! do you grasp that? Even this disturbance in the head, however, presented a problem: “how is it possible? how could it actually have happened to heads such as *we* have, we men of aristocratic descent, of the best society, happy, well-constituted, noble, and virtuous?” – thus noble Greeks asked themselves for centuries in the face of every incomprehensible atrocity or wantonness with which one of their kind had polluted himself. “He must have been deluded by a *god*,” they concluded finally, shaking their heads . . . This expedient is *typical* of the Greeks . . . In this way the gods served in those days to justify man to a certain extent even in his wickedness, they served as the originators of evil – in those days they took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt” (GM: II, 23; see, also, EH: *Wise*, 5).

From what we saw in the previous section, in the light of the context of the discussion, we could plausibly suggest that Nietzsche is here further emphasizing the point that the Olympian gods as the life-affirming type of gods were ‘a transfiguring mirror’, the gods who were founded on a human ideal, and “in whom *the animal* in man felt deified and did *not* lacerate itself, did *not* rage against itself” (GM: II, 23). The Christian God inflicts ‘punishment’ on one for one’s ‘animal’ instincts and egoistic characteristics and emotions – ‘evil’ as the ‘guilt’ towards Him. On the other hand, by themselves possessing and experiencing all the human characteristics and emotions – ‘evil’ as the ‘guilt’ –, by themselves knowing “wrath, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, and violence” and experiencing “the delightful *ardeurs* of victory and annihilation” (see AC: 16), not only did the life-affirming gods deify the Greeks’ ‘animal’ nature, but they also justified even its consequences – not turning them into ‘sin’, as the Christian God does –, thereby enabling the Greeks to continue affirming life entirely.¹⁴

However, clearly, such is possible only for the Greeks with specific characteristics and in a given socio-political condition. That is, compared to the Greeks as the unintelligent and unreflective worldly nobles with no inner depth, we moderns are extremely clever and reflective creatures with considerable inner depths. While the unintelligent nobles with absolute ‘self-reverence’ may have been able to convince themselves that their misdeeds are ‘foolishness’ or ‘disturbances in the head’ resulted from their being ‘deluded by a *god*’,¹⁵ such primitive

¹⁴ Owen interprets this passage in relation to the notion of agency – the idea of a “doer” behind the deed, or the idea of “a neutral independent “subject”, i.e. ‘free choice’, which Nietzsche often rejects (see GM: I, 13; also GS: 127) –, suggesting that, in Nietzsche’s view, the Greek “used his gods to allow for a limited separation of agent and act within the context of his commitment to an expressive picture of agency” (see Owen 2007: p. 109). While I do not necessarily find such interpretation implausible, this point does not seem relevant to the essence of Nietzsche’s positive religious thinking as I understand it.

¹⁵ In HAH, Nietzsche claims that among the worldly nobles as the ‘good men’ in master morality, it was believed that “In the community of the good goodness is inherited; it is impossible that a bad man could grow up out of such

excuses are hardly something either by which we can be convinced or which we can adopt. Further, along with their life-affirming gods, another key reason why the Greeks were able to ‘ward off’ the *moral* bad conscience was that they possessed a sufficient way of dealing with the *pre-moral* bad conscience, i.e. a suffering caused by the intense frustration of one’s natural aggressive instincts. As we saw in Chapter 4-C, while the nobles experienced the frustrations of their aggressive instincts and thus were tormented by the *pre-moral* bad conscience inside their communities, they were still able to compensate their frustrations by engaging in hideous acts outside their communities. In this way, they remained relatively free from experiencing the ‘*internalization*’, and hence they remained unintelligent and were able to continue using such primitive excuses. But, again, such a way of dealing with the suffering caused by the *pre-moral* bad conscience is simply out of question for us.¹⁶

Indeed, here, the crucial fact is that the life-affirming type of gods, as presented in Nietzsche’s mature works, do not actually seem to provide any real solution to the suffering caused by the *pre-moral* bad conscience, or to suffering in general. As we saw in Chapter 4-C, according to Nietzsche’s account, the worldly nobles ultimately fell victim to the priestly interpretation of suffering and came to experience *moral* guilt and the *moral* bad conscience. And I suggested two main reasons for this. Firstly, through the eventual lack of external enemies, the nobles became unable to release their frustrations by going outside. And as their instincts and impulses became repressed and frustrated more intensely, not only did they come to be afflicted with *ressentiment*, but they also came to acquire greater inner depths, which were sufficient enough to drive them to start evaluating their unpleasant conditions and to seek a ‘*guilty agent*’ responsible for it: which is a necessary precondition for the ‘moralization’ of guilt

good soil”. Hence, when one of the nobles should commit “something unworthy of the good, one looks for excuses; one ascribes the guilt to a god, for example, by saying he struck the subjected, the powerless” (see HAH: I, 45).

¹⁶ See Owen (2007): pp. 109-110

and the bad conscience. And secondly, the highly clever and cunning priest found no difficulty in persuading such nobles to blame themselves for their frustrations.

But, here, we could question why the nobles had to resort to the Christian God for an interpretation of suffering, rather than to their life-affirming gods. For, after all, it is not as if they had always been free of suffering: they clearly suffered from the *pre-moral* bad conscience inside their community. Certainly, Nietzsche remarks that the suffering caused by the *pre-moral* bad conscience, which resulted from being “*finally* enclosed within the walls of society and of peace” (my emphasis), was something previously unknown to the nobles, about which they were at loss as to what to do (see GM: II, 16). In the light of such a remark, we could perhaps suppose that the life-affirming gods can give a meaning to every suffering except the specific sort of suffering caused by the most intense *pre-moral* bad conscience. Or, we could also suppose that what Nietzsche has in mind is that, even if the life-affirming gods did give a meaning to such suffering, the nobles in question were increasingly becoming unable to recognise such a ‘*noble*’ meaning of suffering, so to speak, since they were becoming *slavish* by being afflicted with *ressentiment*. But then, Nietzsche in GM claims explicitly, “The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far – and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning! It was the *only* meaning offered so far [my emphasis]; any meaning is better than none at all” (GM: III, 28; see, also, EH: *GM*). This strongly suggests that, in Nietzsche’s view, the life-affirming gods actually did not provide any meaning to any suffering, and that the only reason the nobles did not originally suffer from the meaninglessness of suffering is either because, as we saw in the previous section, on Nietzsche’s picture, they, who possessed “pessimism of *strength*” (BT: ASC, I), were capable of *embracing* their suffering willingly, and presumably without seeking a meaning in it, or because their lack of inner depth meant that they did not seriously seek a meaning in their suffering –

they only began to suffer from it once they acquired greater inner depth by being ‘*finally* enclosed within’ their peaceful community.¹⁷

In Chapter 2-A, I pointed out that, according to Schopenhauer’s account of religion, the ability to deal with man’s suffering condition, to provide a ‘solution’ to the problem of pain and death, is the most essential function of any authentic religion: Young in his book actually claims to use Schopenhauer’s account of religion – which, in his view, is “in broad outline, *correct*” – as “a standard for assessing whether there is anything in Nietzsche’s positive [religious] thinking that counts as genuinely *religious* thinking”.¹⁸ Certainly, as we saw, the ability in question is recognisable in the two types of ‘life-affirming’ religion which Nietzsche presents in BT: the justification of suffering and death belongs to the heart of his early religious thinking. But if what I have suggested is correct, this ability is absent from the ancient Greek religion as he describes it in his mature works. It means that a new ‘contemporary and Greek’ religion, which, according to Young, Nietzsche aspires to create, cannot be in itself regarded as an authentic religion or ‘genuinely *religious*’ at least from Schopenhauer’s viewpoint.

¹⁷ Along with the puzzle concerning who really conducted the slave revolt that I mentioned before, this is another chief puzzle in GM, which different commentators have attempted to solve in various ways (see, e.g. Leiter 2002: pp. 283-286 & Owen 2007: pp. 121-122). Certainly, as some commentators point out (see, e.g., Danto 2005: p. 159), in section 7 of the second essay of GM, Nietzsche talks about how, among the ancient Greeks, human suffering had a meaning, as “*festival plays*” for the gods. He claims that, in order to justify themselves and their “evils”, the ancient Greeks – and other ancient people – created their gods as “the friends of *cruel* spectacles”, who “will not easily let an interesting painful spectacle pass unnoticed”: “Every evil the sight of which edifies a god is justified” (see GM: II, 7). However, in my view, this idea of suffering as providing a spectacle for the gods is something which Nietzsche does not really develop. And more crucially, the suffering in question seems to be the suffering one inflicts on others, not one’s own suffering (see GM: I, 11). And looking at the context of the whole section, it appears to be something more like a point Nietzsche makes in relation to his psychological insights – such as his insight into our fundamental cruel nature –, and also, to some degree, his idea of the worldly life-affirmation, specifically its aesthetic approach to human suffering, rather than his positive religious thinking.

¹⁸ See Young (2006): p. 10

Now, Young also seemingly notices how the life-affirming gods, as Nietzsche presents them in his mature works, fail to provide a meaning to human suffering. So, Young attributes the ability to provide a ‘solution’ to the problem of pain and death to what he calls ‘Dionysian’ pantheism. In Young’s view, it is, in a nutshell, an unconditional overall type of life-affirmation, i.e. the worldly life-affirmation expressed by ‘the eternal recurrence’, that is achieved in an “intoxicated” state of ecstatic “*this-worldly*” transcendence, where one transcends “mortality”, ecstatically identifies oneself with and becomes “the all-embracing totality of things”, and attains an extraordinary “(self-)transcendent perspective on the world”, from which one firmly recognises that “the world is divine” and all things in it are “absolutely good, ‘perfect’”: put simply, it is basically something like the Dionysian ‘tragic’ effect which Nietzsche presents in BT – “the idea of identifying with something other than our mortal individuality” – being modified and made “non-‘metaphysical’, *naturalistic*”.¹⁹

However, I am sceptical about such ‘Dionysian’ pantheism. Certainly, even after BT, though Nietzsche no longer maintains his youthful idea of the Dionysian ‘intoxication’ as “the destruction of the *principium individuationis*” (BT: 2) – since he now rejects metaphysics –, he still occasionally associates the term ‘Dionysian’ with – *this-worldly* – ‘intoxication’ in his works (see TI: IX, 10). And, as I suggested before, he also continues to maintain his fascination for – *this-worldly* – ‘intoxication’. Further, it is also true that he does occasionally talk about ‘pantheism’ (see HAH: I, 272). And at one point in TI, Nietzsche speaks of “Dionysus” as “the

¹⁹ See Young (2006): pp. 107-111 & 141-143. Parkes is another commentator who attributes ‘Dionysian pantheism’ to Nietzsche (see Parkes 2000). Benson also attributes the similar kind of an unconditional overall type of life-affirmation achieved in an ecstatic ‘this-worldly’ self-transcendence, what he calls ‘Dionysian Pietism’ or ‘Dionysian faith’, to Nietzsche: but, unlike Young, Benson regards ‘music’ as the key to reaching such state (see Benson 2008: *passim*, especially Introduction & Chapter 9). Also, in this connection, there are commentators who emphasize Nietzsche’s mysticism, ‘mystical’ elements in his writings (see Roberts 2000, Urpeth 2000 & Marsden 2000; also De Lubac 1995: pp. 82-95 & 469-50 & Salomé 2001: pp. 91, 123-124 & 138).

faith that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole” (TI: IX, 49). But then, it seems to me that Nietzsche never really develops the idea of ‘Dionysian’ pantheism. Moreover, from what we saw in Chapter 4-B, there seems no reason why the worldly life-affirmation cannot be achieved without transcending our everyday self. Indeed, nowhere in his works does he indicate that such affirmation would require the identification with ‘the totality of things’: he often seems to use ‘the Dionysian’ simply as another term to describe his idea of the worldly life-affirmation (see TI: III, 6 & X, 5). Furthermore, looking at the way Young discusses ‘Dionysian’ pantheism in his book, it actually appears that there is no practical connection between this pantheism and the new ‘contemporary and Greek’ religious festival: what enables one to enter the ‘intoxicated’ state of ecstatic transcendence is not the new religious festival.²⁰ If that is indeed the case, the new religious festival itself would still not be regarded as an authentic religion or ‘genuinely *religious*’ at least from the viewpoint of Schopenhauer’s account of religion.

On the basis of all those points, my suggestion is that Nietzsche does not aim to recreate a Greek religion or a new religious myth. Rather, in my view, what Nietzsche actually provides or wishes to offer through his continuous positive valuation of ‘the life-affirming type of gods’, through his idea of the life-affirming gods, is a particular religious perspective on ‘life’. More concretely, through his image of the life-affirming gods, what he tries to give us readers is a new religious sensibility.

My view might be best explained by using an example. Consider, for instance, Rilke’s ‘Angel[s]’ in his Duino Elegies.²¹ When we read the Duino Elegies, not many of us would

²⁰ See Young (2006): pp. 142 & 176

²¹ For writing the rest of this section, I have widely referred to ‘Introduction’ & ‘Commentary’ of Rilke’s Duino Elegies by J. B. Leishman, which is found in the Hogarth Press edition (see Rilke 1968: pp. 9-21 & 101-147). I have also drawn many ideas from Heller (1988).

seriously ask whether the Angel really exists. For, it is obvious that the Angel is an imaginary being. In fact, we could easily and plausibly see that the Angel is a ‘symbol’, a symbolic image, which Rilke creates and uses as an expression of his inward experiences, his innermost feelings and aspirations, his desires and longings, his impressions and views, his beliefs and visions, and so on.

Rilke’s conception of the Angel of the Duino Elegies is complicated and often obscure, and thus it is difficult to define what exactly Rilke meant and wanted to express by it. But the Angel is basically, as Heller puts it, “Rilke’s embodiment of “the fullness of being””.²² Or more concretely, as Leishman suggests,

The Angel may be described as the hypostatization of the idea of a perfect consciousness, – of a being in whom the limitations and contradictions of present human nature have been transcended, a being in whom thought and action, insight and achievement, will and capability, the actual and the ideal, are one. He is both an inspiration and a rebuke, a source of consolation and also a source of terror; for, while he guarantees the validity of man’s highest aspirations and gives what Rilke would call a “direction” to his heart, he is at the same time a perpetual reminder of man’s immeasurable remoteness from his goal.²³

From Leishman’s suggestion, it is clear that it is “impossible” for us to “become like the Angels”.²⁴ And it is also evident that, in the Duino Elegies, Rilke himself is in no sense telling us to become like the Angel: he makes clear elsewhere that the Angel is indeed ““*terrible*” to us”

²² Heller (1988): p. 84

²³ Rilke (1968): pp. 101-102

²⁴ See Rilke (1968): p. 103

humans.²⁵ Rather, by contrasting the ‘terrible’ Angel with us humans, Rilke is trying to illustrate and illuminate his insight into the nature and meaning of human existence, or more specifically, “the limitations and deficiencies of human nature”, such as “our transitoriness, our inability to accept it as a condition, our distractedness and half-heartedness, our fear of death”.²⁶ And through this symbolic image of the Angel, what Rilke also tries to do is to show us readers a possibility of seeing and accepting our human existence and the world differently, to give us a new viewpoint or a new sensibility, from which or with which we can positively affirm and celebrate ‘life’ as a whole, including those certain fundamental defects, limitations and weaknesses of our human nature, such as ‘suffering’ and ‘death’: in essence, he is trying to convey his idea or vision of what we should be, and how we can become it. As Rilke himself says, “*This world, regarded no longer from the human point of view, but as it is within the angel, is perhaps my real task, one, at any rate, in which all my previous attempts would converge*”.²⁷

Rilke is, of course, not alone in such attempt. As I suggested in Chapter 2-A, what many great novelists and poets typically aim to achieve through their literary works is to offer a new worldview. These novelists and poets all possess their own ‘world’, just as Rilke does. And their literary works are essentially representations of such a ‘world’ of theirs, in which their attitude towards life, their insights into the nature and meaning of human activities such as suffering and love, their outlook such as on morality, on human existence and on god[s], their ideas and visions such as those of human liberation, of human redemption, and of the future destiny of humanity, are tactfully articulated and endorsed: this is surely the reason why some novelists, such as Dostoevsky, are also often regarded as a psychologist, as a philosopher, as a religious writer, and as a prophet. And given that their literary works are of such nature, what

²⁵ See Rilke (1968): p. 101

²⁶ See Rilke (1968): pp.103-104 & 132

²⁷ Rilke (1968): p. 10

they want to do is to guide us readers into this ‘world’ of theirs, in order to move people, to urge people to see themselves and the world from a different perspective in a certain new light, to change people’s sensitivity and attitude towards ‘life’.

And my argument is that Nietzsche’s life-long positive valuation of the life-affirming type of gods should also be approached in this spirit. That is, just like Rilke’s ‘Angel’, Nietzsche’s ‘life-affirming gods’ are best interpreted as essentially a symbolic image, a symbolic expression of his inner experiences, his innermost feelings and aspiration, his ideas and visions, which he wants to convey to people. And by contrasting this symbolic image of ‘the life-affirming gods’ with the Christian God, Nietzsche is trying to articulate and express his imaginative vision of ‘ideal’ life. Further, with this symbolic image of the life-affirming gods, what Nietzsche also ultimately aims to do is to show us a new possible way of looking at life, and to change our religious sensibility and steer it in the right direction, thereby evoking in us a new religious sensibility, with which we can positively see and feel our human existence and the world as something ‘*embraceable*’.

Let me clarify my view. One of the key points about Nietzsche’s – religious – thinking as a whole is that he never at any point denies the existence of our fundamental religious instinct or sensibility. As we saw, he finds nothing wrong with the ancient Greeks or the ancient Jews creating their god[s]. In his view, it is natural for people to feel the need to create and possess god[s]. Indeed, unlike some philosophers, he clearly believes that our religious instinct or sensibility is something that cannot and will not go away. While we are no doubt increasingly becoming atheists, this does not mean that our religious instincts or sensibility have become extinct. So, for instance, he remarks in HAH,

However much one may believe one has weaned oneself from religion, the weaning has not been so complete that one does not enjoy encountering religious moods and sentiments without conceptual content, for example in music; and when a philosophy demonstrates to us the justification of metaphysical hopes and the profound peace of soul to be attained through them, and speaks for example of ‘the whole sure evangel in the glance of Raphael’s Madonna’, we go out to meet such assertions and expositions with particular warmth of feeling; the philosopher here has an easier task of demonstration, for he here encounters a heart eager to take what he has to offer (HAH: I, 131).

And in fact, he observes in BGE, “It seems to me that the religious instinct is indeed in the process of growing powerfully – but the theistic satisfaction it refuses with deep suspicion” (BGE: 53).

So, it is in this context that, in AC, he remarks in the midst of his merciless attack on Christianity,

That the strong races of northern Europe did not reject the Christian God certainly does no credit to their religious genius – not to speak of their taste. There is no excuse whatever for their failure to dispose of such a sickly and senile product of decadence. But a curse lies upon them for this failure: they have absorbed sickness, old age, and contradiction into all their instincts – and since then they have not *created* another god. Almost two thousand years – and not a single new god! But still, as if his existence were justified, as if he represented the ultimate and the maximum of the god-creating power, of the *creator spiritus* in man, this pitiful god of Christian monotono-theism! This hybrid product of decay, this mixture of zero, concept, and contradiction, in which all the instincts of decadence, all cowardices and wearinesses of the soul, find their sanction! (AC: 19).

Nietzsche criticises the Christian God, not simply because he denies the existence of ‘god[s]’, but because he finds the Christian conception of God to be “one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth”, which represents “the low-water mark in the descending development of divine types” (AC: 18). As he claims, “That we find no God – either in history or in nature or behind nature – is not what differentiates *us*, but that we experience what has been revered as God, not as “godlike” but as miserable, as absurd, as harmful, not merely as an error but as a *crime against life*. We deny God as God” (AC: 47). In his view, the development of the conception of god over the last two millennia or so – from the life-affirming gods as the noble’s self-glorification and the transfiguration of life to the Christian God as an “instrument of torture” and “the *contradiction* of life” – is not “*progress*”, but degeneration, “a *reduction* of the divine” (see GM: II, 22 & AC: 17-18). And it is clear from the above passage that what Nietzsche objects to, and is concerned about, is the state of our religious instinct or sensibility, which has failed to reject the Christian God.

In James Joyce’s novel Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, a character called Cranly remarks dispassionately, “It is a curious thing, do you know . . . , how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve”.²⁸ This remark, I think, summarises the state of our religious sensibility as Nietzsche sees it. Indeed, Nietzsche writes in GS, “God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too” (GS: 108). In his view, while many of us no longer believe in the Christian God, we are still very much under the influence of Christianity, and still blindly and half-heartedly cling to Christian morality and values, or at least to their secularised versions (see, e.g., TI: IX, 5). For instance, Nietzsche emphasizes that even “we men of knowledge of today”, who claim to believe neither

²⁸ Joyce (1992): p. 261

in God nor metaphysics, are under the influence of Christianity, since our belief in truth, our ‘unconditional’ will to truth, is actually an expression of the Christian ascetic ideal, of its faith in the value of ‘truthfulness’ (see GM: III, 24; also GS: 344 & GM: III, 27).

And more crucially, as his extensive examination and criticism of the Christian moralised conceptions such as ‘guilt’, ‘bad conscience’, ‘punishment’ and ‘sin’ indicates, Nietzsche clearly believes that, despite our disbelief in the existence of the Christian God, our inner life – our way of thinking, our attitude towards ourselves and the world – is still, at the deepest level, imbued with these conceptions: “We modern men are the heirs of the conscience-vivisection and self-torture of millennia: this is what we have practiced longest, it is our distinctive art perhaps, and in any case our subtlety in which we have acquired a refined taste. Man has all too long had an “evil eye” for his natural inclinations, so that they have finally become inseparable from his “bad conscience.” (GM: II, 24). In many ways, we are still unable to free ourselves from the one ‘universal’ ideal of ‘anti-human’ nature which the Christian God imposes. To put it differently, our conception of ‘the divine’ is still fundamentally that of Christianity: “Modern men, obtuse to all Christian nomenclature, no longer feel the gruesome superlative that struck a classical taste in the paradoxical formula “god on the cross.”” (BGE: 46). And in Nietzsche’s view, it is this continuous enslavement of ours to those Christian moralised conceptions, to the one ‘universal’ norm of ‘anti-human’ nature, to the image of ‘god on the cross’, that has largely prevented us from affirming life entirely, prevented us from truly flourishing in our own ways and becoming ‘higher types’.

Certainly, in his works of the middle period, Nietzsche claims that we can become free from the Christian moralised conceptions such as ‘guilt’, ‘punishment’ and ‘sin’ simply by the means of ‘knowledge’, by recognising their real origins. So, for instance, he writes in HAH,

When one has grasped how ‘sin came into the world’, namely through errors of reason by virtue of which men mistake one another – indeed, the individual man mistakes himself – to be much blacker and more evil than is actually the case, then all one’s feelings are very much relieved and lightened, and man and world sometimes appear in a halo of harmlessness the sight of which fills one with a thorough sense of wellbeing (HAH: I, 124; see, also, HAH: I, 133 & 135).

And in his works of the late period, while continuing to devote himself to his task of exposing the real origins of the Christian moralised conceptions, he claims that the demise of our faith in the Christian God will possibly help us achieve freedom from those conceptions. So, for instance, in GM, as well as pointing out the fact that ‘sin’ is nothing more than “physiological depression” (GM: III, 16) or “a piece of animal psychology” (GM: III, 20) being misinterpreted by the priests qua the men of *ressentiment*, he writes,

The advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth. Presuming we have gradually entered upon the *reverse* course, there is no small probability that with the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God there is now also a considerable decline in mankind’s feeling of guilt; indeed, the prospect cannot be dismissed that the complete and the definitive victory of atheism might free mankind of this whole feeling of guilty indebtedness toward its origin, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together (GM: II, 20).

Yet, in AC, written near the end of his career, he writes explicitly,

We know, today our *conscience* knows, what these uncanny inventions of the priests and the church are really worth, *what ends they served* in reducing mankind to such a state of self-violation that its sight can arouse nausea: the concepts “beyond,” “Last Judgement,” “immortality of the soul,” and “soul” itself are instruments of torture, systems of cruelties by virtue of which the priest became master, remained master. Everybody knows this, *and yet everything continues as before* (AC: 38).

By the time Nietzsche writes this, he is well aware of the fact that most of his contemporaries are already atheists: as he says in the above passage of GM, he observes ‘the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God’ in modern Europe. Indeed, he already acknowledges this fact in GS, in the fable of ‘the madman’: the people in the market place – the modern Europeans – laugh at the madman who declares ‘the death of God’, because they are no longer concerned with God (see GS: 125). In other words, Nietzsche now clearly seems to recognise more than ever that the issue here is not only ‘knowledge’ or ‘*conscience*’, not only a matter of intellectual conviction, but also ‘religious sensibility’. That is, what is really needed for us to overcome the elements of Christian ‘slavish’ morality and concepts in ourselves, to free ourselves from the one universal norm of ‘life-denying’ nature, and to attain a new ‘second innocence’, is a change in our ‘religious sensibility’. And this change in our religious sensibility is, I suggest, what Nietzsche ultimately hopes to bring out through his symbolic image of ‘the life-affirming type of gods’.

So, who exactly are ‘the life-affirming gods’? What is the content of this symbolic image of ‘the life-affirming gods’?

As we have seen, in his works, through his discussions of ‘higher types’, ‘nobility’, ‘life-affirmation’, and so on, Nietzsche constantly indicates and reveals his idea of what he wants us to become, which is, of course, in many and significant ways, what he himself wants to

become. For instance, roughly speaking, he wants us to *embrace* life entirely, including those aspects of ourselves which are condemned and rejected as ‘evil’ by the Christian God, such as our animal instincts and egoistic characteristics and emotions. He wants us not to get rid of our ‘evil’, but to accept it without a feeling of shame, sublimate – “spiritualize” (TI: V, 1) – it, and use it productively for positive purposes: “I know of the hatred and envy of your hearts. You are not great enough not to know hatred and envy. Be great enough, then, not to be ashamed of them” (Z: I, 10). He wants us to overcome the elements of Christian ‘slavish’ morality and concepts – such as *ressentiment*, ‘guilt’, ‘sin’ and ‘punishment’ – in ourselves, and stop feeling our being as something fundamentally guilty, something fallen or flawed by nature. He wants us to attain complete satisfaction with ourselves, give a synthetic unity to our character, possess a ‘style’ of our own and create our own virtues and goods. He wants us to abandon, not waste ourselves on, unhealthy metaphysical speculation. Instead, he wants us to take better care of our physiological well-being by attending properly to “nutrition, place, climate, recreation”: he wants us to shake off punitive and contemptuous attitude towards the body and not to despise “these small things” that could significantly grace and enrich our life (see EH: *Clever*, 10). He wants us to possess a certain vitality, dynamism and grandness in body and spirit, and grasp and approach life not in a mercenary spirit – a petty obsession for the balancing up of good and bad in one’s life – but with an over-flowing energy and intensity, as ‘the squandering spirit’ does. He wants us to accept suffering not as some deserved punishment but as the hallmark of our life, and turn it to account. He wants us to cherish friendship, to have friends with whom we can share and exchange healthy kinds of thoughts and ideas and the joy of life. He wants us to be “*Honest* towards ourselves and whoever *else* is a friend to us; *brave* towards the enemy; *magnanimous* towards the defeated; *polite* – always” (D: 556). And his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods is, I suggest, what sums up all these kinds of things he has in mind. That is,

what the life-affirming gods symbolise is Nietzsche's imaginative vision of a certain 'ideal' way of living, of a certain 'ideal' life, which, he believes, the Christian God renders impossible.

In Chapter 6 of Town of Lucca, Heinrich Heine, whom Nietzsche admires (see EH: *Clever*, 4), begins with eight lines from Homer's *Iliad*, in which the Olympian gods of ancient Greece are enjoying a splendid feast, full of delight and bliss.²⁹ Heine then writes,

Then suddenly a pale, bloodstained Jew came panting in, with a crown of thorns on his head and a great wooden cross over his shoulder; and he threw the cross on to the gods' high table, so that the golden goblets trembled, and the gods fell silent and turned pale, and become paler and paler, till at last they entirely dissolved into mist. Now there was a sorrowful time, and the world turned grey and dark. They were no longer any happy gods; Olympus became a hospital where gods who had been flayed, roasted and impaled crept tediously about, bandaged their wounds, and sang dismal songs. Religion no longer granted any joy, but only consolation; it was a doleful, bloodthirsty religion for delinquents.³⁰

Nietzsche clearly shares with Heine the same religious sentiment expressed in the above passage. For, again and again, his writings articulate the sense of 'oppressiveness' and 'melancholy' which the Christian God instils in one's spirit. As we have seen, Christianity claims that nothing in this world is ultimately important or pointful or fulfilling, and that true meaning and happiness – 'consolation' – lie elsewhere: all our worldly desires and efforts will ultimately lead to failures, mistakes, and disappointments. It also claims that we are intrinsically 'guilty' before God, tainted with 'original sin', because of who we are, of our human nature, and

²⁹ For writing this part, I have widely referred to Christopher Hamilton's unpublished conference paper "Nietzsche and Religious Melancholy". I have also drawn some ideas from Hamilton (1998) & Hamilton (2007).

³⁰ Heine (2006): p. 160

that we are now irredeemably ‘sinful’, owing to the sacrifice God made for us – the image of ‘god on the cross’: our suffering is deserved ‘punishment’ for our unworthiness before God. And all this makes this world a place of misery and sorrow, where everything is fundamentally worthless, and where we are burdened with a permanent sense of ‘guilt’ and a piercing feeling of shame and self-disgust. And it is clear that Nietzsche himself keenly feels this sense of ‘oppressiveness’ and ‘melancholy’, especially in the light of both the dreadful sense of unredeemable loss which afflicts his writings – he certainly does not believe in the Christian ‘consolation’ – and the fact that he himself suffers from those Christian moralised conceptions: his deeply ‘cinematic’ imagination is clearly often captured by the Christian God, by the image of ‘god on the cross’ (see Chapter 1-C, 2-A & 3-C). So, in response to this sense of ‘oppressiveness’ and ‘melancholy’ – ‘the spirit of gravity’, as he also often calls it –, what Nietzsche’s writings repeatedly express is a longing for a ‘lightness’ or ‘cheerfulness’ of spirit, a desire to be “superficial – *out of profundity*” (GS: *Preface*, 4), that is, to be able “to look into the depths of the suffering and yet find life bright and cheerful”.³¹ And such a sense of ‘lightness’ and ‘cheerfulness’, a way of living or a view of things that enables one to possess and retain such freedom of spirit in the midst of the harsh reality of life, is what Nietzsche has in mind when he speaks of the life-affirming gods, especially those of the Greeks.

And just as Heine does in the above passage of his, what Nietzsche repeatedly does in his work is to contrast these two different religious worldviews. As we have seen, throughout his works, he continually portrays the life-affirming gods as “a transfiguring mirror”, in which “all things, whether good or evil, are deified” (BT: 3), including one’s human nature, things that are condemned as ‘evil’ by the Christian God. Unlike the Christian God before whom one experiences “a feeling of total depravity” and a relentless sense of ‘guilt’ and self-disgust, they

³¹ I have borrowed this phrase from the above-mentioned unpublished conference paper of Hamilton’s.

are gods with whom one can feel “inter-related”, and before whom one has no need to be ashamed of oneself (see HAH: I, 111 & 114). They are gods who take upon themselves “not the punishment but . . . the guilt” (GM: II, 23). Unlike the Christian God who disturbs or destroys one’s joy, they are gods whom one thanks for one’s joys and delights. They are cheerful gods who laugh and dance: “I would believe only in a god who could dance” (Z: I, 7; see, also, e.g., Z: III, 8 & 12). And by contrasting this symbolic image of the cheerful life-affirming gods as his own conception of ‘the divine’ with the oppressive and melancholic image of ‘god on the cross’ as “one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth” (AC: 18), what Nietzsche tries to do is not only to illustrate and illuminate his criticism of the life-denying nature of the Christian God, but also to express his imaginative vision of an ‘ideal’ way of living, of an ‘ideal’ life, of human existence and the world no longer tainted or condemned or devalued by those Christian conceptions such as ‘guilt’ and ‘punishment’ but instead re-deified: a world ‘beyond good and evil’, “a world without feeling of sin”, which he typically sees in “Greek antiquity” (GS: 135). And through this symbolic image of the life-affirming gods, what Nietzsche is also trying to do is to move us readers, to give us a new religious perspective on ‘life’, and to evoke in us a new religious sensibility, which can assist us in overcoming the elements of Christian ‘slavish’ morality and concepts in ourselves, in releasing ourselves from the universal norms of ‘life-denying’ nature, in purifying our inner life that is still in some way haunted by the image of ‘god on the cross’, and hence in attaining a new ‘second innocence’.

That is, in my view, Nietzsche is not telling us to *create* the life-affirming gods. Nor is he trying to get us to *believe* in the life-affirming gods, in the way the ancient Greeks and the ancient Israelites did *believe* in their god[s]. Instead, what he is articulating and offering through his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods is a possibility of living our life and seeing and feeling ourselves and the world differently and in a certain new light, specifically, in that

particular way I described earlier. Certainly, it is very likely that Nietzsche is wishing or hoping that we will agree with and accept this imaginative vision of his of a certain ‘ideal’ way of living, of a certain ‘ideal’ life, which his life-affirming gods symbolise. He presumably wants to say, and wants to convince us, that we *ought* to see, feel and live life in this particular way. But, this is something that, in truth, a central strand of his philosophical position does not really allow him to do, since, while he often speaks of a “*counterideal*” or an “*opposing ideal*” to the Christian ascetic ideal (see EH: *GM* & *GM*: III, 25), he also writes explicitly at one point, ““What are you really doing, erecting an ideal or knocking one down?” I may perhaps be asked. But have you ever asked yourselves sufficiently how much the erection of *every* ideal on earth has cost? How much reality has had to be misunderstood and slandered, how many lies have had to be sanctified, how many consciences disturbed, how much “God” sacrificed every time?” (*GM*: II, 24). So, rather, he is better understood as suggesting that we *could* see, feel and live life in that particular way, that we *might* in fact find our life better and become more creative and life-affirming if we *could* see, feel and live life in that particular way.

Commenting on Rilke, Leishman remarks,

In 1917 he [Rilke] had written that *only through one of the greatest and innermost renovations it has ever gone through will the world be able to save and maintain itself*, and two years later he declared that the task of the intellectual in the post-war world would be *to prepare in men’s hearts the way for those gentle, mysterious, trembling transformations, from which alone the understandings and harmonies of a serener future will proceed*. The *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus* were Rilke’s contributions to this task, and the story of them, which has here been related in some detail, is a proof that the task is possible.³²

³² Rilke (1968): pp. 15-16

Reading the Duino Elegies, not everyone will feel exactly the same way. Not everyone will agree with or accept Rilke's insights or visions expressed in his 'Angel'. Not everyone will care about them. But it seems to me clear that, for those of us who sympathize with and accept his visions, or, even for those of us who are willing at least to be open to accepting his visions, this simple experience of being in touch with the 'Angel' does have a subtle and yet profound transformative effect on our whole inner being. As we read through the Duino Elegies, we are aware that, somehow, in some way, our inner life and our spiritual condition have been renovated and transformed simply by temporarily being in touch with "*This world, regarded no longer from the human point of view, but as it is within the angel*".³³

And I think that what Nietzsche is at least trying to achieve with his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods is, similarly, such a renovation and a transformation. Certainly, just like Rilke's 'Angel', his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods is in a way intensely 'personal', inextricably bound up in his own personality and personal experiences, heavily invested with his own deepest desires, longings and needs. He sees something wrong with his own religious sensibility and his own way of being, and wants to change them. And his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods and his imaginative vision of the 'ideal' life expressed through it are undoubtedly a part of such personal attempt of his. They are amongst other things his own means to release himself from the image of 'god on the cross' that haunts him and holds him captive, his own means to deal with the sense of 'oppressiveness' and 'melancholy' that Christianity generates, by which he is tormented, and from which he seeks to escape. But then, despite his emotional investment in them, they are not '*merely personal*', since they are also largely the fruit of his life-long philosophical investigation into the life-denying and life-harming nature of Christianity, what are offered in response to his socio-psychological or

³³ Rilke (1968): p. 10

socio-cultural diagnosis of the general condition of modern Europeans' inner life and culture after the death of God: he recognises that, despite the decay of Christian belief, the negative influence of Christianity is still spreading over various realms of human affairs, and that the conditions of our 'life' – our well-being in general – are still profoundly undermined by it. In this sense, they possess a kind of universal validity and general appeal to us all, whether we can actually recognise this or not. And what Nietzsche is hoping is that at least some of us will recognise this and accept his symbolic image and his imaginative vision, and that his own personal attempt can also help us in our own attempt to change our religious sensibility and our own way of being.

As we read Nietzsche's works, and as we are repeatedly brought into contact with his symbolic image of the life-affirming gods and invited into his imaginative vision – or understanding – of the 'ideal' way of living, of the 'ideal' life, of 'a world without feeling of sin', not only do we learn and grow morally and spiritually, but also our religious sensibility becomes gradually transformed by being moved by this symbolic image and this imaginative vision. Simply by being in touch with them repeatedly, we are again and again encouraged to reflect on our own way of living, on our own life, on our own religious sensibility, and are given opportunities to realise how our – inner – life is still fundamentally ingrained and darkened with the Christian moralised conceptions, the universal norm of 'anti-human' nature and the image of 'god on the cross', and how this undermines our psychological health and makes us life-denying. And through such a '*therapeutic*' process (see, e.g., Chapter 2-A & 4-B), Nietzsche hopes, we – and he himself – will eventually come to acquire a new religious sensibility, with which we might gradually become better equipped to *embrace* ourselves and the world entirely in the way which his ideas of life-affirmation suggest, to discover and possess a 'style' of our own, to flourish in our own ways, and to achieve new forms of human greatness. This, I suggest, is how

he may intend the life-affirming type of gods to contribute towards the nurturing of 'higher types' as his highest goal.

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